Notes

I think it is that the various persons / actors, of which there is one allotted to each oscillation, are phantasms who constitute themselves from out of water and then in some way or another pass through Ludovic's room as he sits in it with his back to the armoire. If the initial conception of the oscillatory structure, whereby each chapter begins with the congealment from water and ends in the dissolution, becomes tiresome, then perhaps I can follow the more winding rhythm of a récit like The Blower or like When the Time Comes--that is, trace crossings, follow upon lines-of-flight naturally, pass off followings as naturally as attention slips from one thing to the next (more naturally, that is, than a baton), so that reminiscence will be what brings the many congealments into the ultimate scansion-order (too roughly (this limits imagination): A boxer enters and lies on his wooden floor in the attitude of a knockout, exits and prepares for his match, recalls having woken up in a bath, then recalls being in Ludovic's sparse room, and during this last recollection there is an opportunity for attention to slide off the boxer and back onto Ludovic, who in turn can remember the boxer's exit, followed by some other entrance, and so forth).

Oscillating Structure

From 7 and 8 November 2024, these plans were quite clear to me:
"[7 November 2024]
Maybe I can reconceive (rewrite, reframe--these are not as good: What I really mean is "rethink," which registers the fact that no extant materiality (exscription) stands to change) "espresso cup" as the very oscillation between love and art, an oscillation that also rhythmically carves out arcs traversing quotidian phenomena (the materiality of living) and the phenomenon of the quotidian and its ecstatic scansion / inter-irruption (in other words, all facets of the lived existential analytic).

Applied: If I ever find a way of stacking and scanning my notes and thoughts such that their conscious-unconscious form becomes legible (I've been thinking recently more and more about the pivotal turn marked by Finnegans Wake to reconceive literary-materiality--all art, perhaps--as precisely the obverse of consciousness, the obverse of thought, the complement of whatever would be the "content" of point-of-view), just for example if I ever get around to performing the operation of spacing out my undelivered letters to Bella and interpelleting the interstices between with layer upon layer of the charged material I've so far semi-rendered by any means, then, maybe the realization of all I've long sought under the sign of "espresso cup" will be the very movement, the oscillation, the rhythm, that traces repeatedly--with the implication of this repetition being an

implicit ad infinitum, an Hantaïan rose--a trajectory from one letter (one distilled crystalline moment of enacted love, in such form as of which I am capable) to the next one, a trajectory that might look every time something like this: Beginning in that kinetic love, that trace-inscription of an act of real love between two persons; descending from there ("waking up") into a self-reflective discourse of love (this leg, this first step of descent, would be some little sub-line of thinking from the "Communion" linearization, perhaps); finding some way (every time some new way) of pragmatically thinking a transmutation between love and art, and thus performing (again and again, once per oscillation, once, that is, per letter) a turn from love-in-principle to art-in-principle; and then, as proof of the pragmatical reality of this understanding, showing the function of art in this way by means of some instance from among my pantheon, whether Hantaï or Pound or Balthus or Rilke or Bonnard or Mallarmé or Redon or Baudelaire or (Proust's) Moreau or Dante or the Sicilians or the Troubadours or the transalpine axis (spanning Italy, Provence, Switzerland, Germany, and Flanders, etc.) of "early renaissance" painters, and, perhaps, leaving off here in their mists. And then rounding out the trough of this (corkscrewing, higher-dimensional) sinusoid, a turn from a "narrator-meeting-artwork" ekphrasis to something more apophatic, some more mystical (peakingly mystical, I guess) crystallization of purest light; and then, once this light has been traversed, there will be each time a reascent to bridge back to the next incantatory registration of real love--and this is, perhaps, the mobilization of the understanding that real love is the sharing of the ecstatic experience of light itself, and this sharing takes any number of different forms each time; though right now I can't think of any good examples, the task here is to enact practicable means to slowly but surely build back up to the perfect, unconscious sleeplike state in which real life, life in love, can resume its dream.

Much is yet unresolved. How, for example, can I string this out into form? With a very clean narrativization like Sebald's nameless interlocutor who spatializes Austerlitz, or with a mistier net of reduplicating characters upon which to diffract the twinkling net as in Fosse, or with a yet more nebulous (yet more combinatorialized) cast like something out of Kan-Sperling? And who are my characters, my voices, anyway? Are they my artists and poets? If they are, can I speak through them or can I realize them with only their words, and if the latter, how can I materialize the space into which they will speak? I feel I need to do more than Dante did in order to really render it real; if I "did Dante" it would read as a pretentious failure of the fanfictionalizing impulse; and, I need to avoid a default to a first-person narrator who resembles me, and just as surely I need to avoid a default to an easy "he" who is me (or is even just so much like me as to be a suffocating painter)--So--what am I left with? A place, perhaps, like the transalpine spring where Rilke's mountain gentian is found; or--better--I feel this might be it: Maybe the real constant, the real "narrator," could be a string of baths and pools which functions as a "clearing" in the Nemerov-

Heidegger–Tarkovsky sense. Perhaps each “waking up” is the populating of this space, and each “going back down” is its emptying back out; and there is a voice even when the space is empty: The voice, then, is a matrix of sheer sensations, description delivered like Genesis 1 and John 1 are delivered, but there are no presences yet, only water, only the materiality and the movement, or the shape, perhaps, of another in the sequence of pools which plot out my correspondance-abstracted notion of clearing, of Heidegger’s clearing reconceived as a bath, a cleansing, a baptism, an immersion, a floating, a dream, a scrubbing, idroterapia, an embodiment (think of Poggio, and even of Wi Spa, and even of team steam or of the first time I had to use a locker room shower, a truly salutary experience without which there would be some blockage and with which there is some kind of commonhood, not quite to go so far as “brotherhood,” akin perhaps to the one Degas painted for Sparta)––there must be some common point, some shared fixed center around which all else revolves, among all these associations of baths and pools: That is, there must be something ever-present across the list I’ve variously assembled (like in Paris, short-term-remembering Bonomi and reaching backward from there) and extended (like when I drove through New Mexico and thought of all the variously subterranean swimming holes) and distilled (in moments of reflection like the one from about a year ago when I had the first real vision of a mountain clearing, a spring, the transalpine somehow as cool water) and opened up (with combinatorializing lists such as the Wikipedia one purporting to catalogue all the different knot-matrices of spa culture); and, once I find it, this something ever-present can become the point of departure and of return for each oscillation, the still space into which the love note enters, the still space into which whatever experience of art may come must ultimately re-dissolve (putting it this way, it sounds much like what the rosary or the kyrie or the gaze at the X did for Fosse; but I want it to do something different, something more in the vein of what I understand Joyce to have done by framing the Wake as an open loop, and as a sleep, and as the obverse of a consciousness etc.: When I materialize the ur-spa-town, that is, I want its real meaning to be the understanding which I have come to, in which love and art are reciprocal and seamlessly interlinking shorthands for semidistinct instantiations of the same Communion that is also my best understanding of God, in which a point-of-view (a human mind) is a prismatic thing only realizable in a fragmentary piecemeal manner in “microencounters” (these I must every time call by a different and better name), …).

But of what voice am I really capable? I feel just as sure that all of the above is delusion, just as sure now as before I tried to type it. To type something like this is to ignore the way that my notes actually are, I think. It is to ignore the rewriting, the overwriting, the comprehensive re-covering that would be necessary before all my linearizations can be overlain and ordered in this way. So what is the voice in which I can put all this? I’ve said it ought to resemble Genesis 1 and John 1, but somehow out of that observational impersonality there must emerge a speaker who can in some way

understandably be given to the ungainly nesting structures of the sentences to which I'm prone, and at the same time understandably be given to my characteristic compulsive self-questioning. What is the voice, then, out of which I can realize all of the above? Can I spin the voice out of the same voice in which I address Bella? More likely, it would be the disquisitionary voice in which I self-reflect on what I say to Bella and try to concoct thinkings of how that vocalized love might somehow conjoin with the (re-Symbolist accounts of) workings of art to save her and me and everyone.
Maybe a better replacement can be found in the lake of voices I've turned over in my hands, not Rabelais nor __ but someone from somewhere in there and Sebald is not right either but perhaps I am getting closer inch by inch.

Deep within here is one account of the reason any real work attaining what are my ambitions here needs to be "oscillatory." From my reading of Beckett's Proust:

> … [the below] scaffolds my ubiquitous "crystalline" figures (and the alchemy ones, the scent ones, and the tincture ones besides) with pyla that reach deeper into the soul-gouffre than I, it need barely be said, know how to go. "The mood, as usual, has no importance. The point of departure of the Proustian exposition is not the crystalline agglomeration but its kernel--the crystallised. The most trivial experience--he says in effect--is encrusted with elements that logically are not related to it and have consequently been rejected by our intelligence : it is imprisoned in a vase filled with a certain perfume and a certain colour and raised to a certain temperature. These vases are suspended along the height of our years, and, not being accessible to our intelligent memory, are in a sense immune, the purity of their climatic content is guaranteed by forgetfulness, each one is kept at its distance, at its date. So that when the imprisoned microcosm is besieged in the manner described, we are flooded by a new air and a new perfume (new precisely because already experienced), and we breathe the true air of Paradise, of the only Paradise that is not the dream of a madman, the Paradise that has been lost" (55).
>
> This follows immediately upon the above. "The identification of immediate with past experience, the recurrence of past action or reaction in the present, amounts to a participation between the ideal and the real, imagination and direct apprehension, symbol and substance. Such participation frees the essential reality that is denied to the contemplative as to the active life. What is common to present and past is more essential than either taken separately. Reality, whether approached imaginatively or empirically, remains a surface, hermetic. Imagination, applied--a priori--to what is absent, is exercised in vacuo and cannot tolerate the limits of the real. Nor

is any direct and purely experimental contact possible between subject and object, because they are automatically separated by the subject's consciousness of perception, and the object loses its purity and becomes a mere intellectual pretext or motive. But, thanks to this reduplication, the experience is at once imaginative and empirical, at once an evocation and a direct perception, real without being merely actual, ideal without being merely abstract, the ideal real, the essential, the extratemporal. But if this mystical experience communicates an extratemporal essence, it follows that the communicant is for the moment an extratemporal being. Consequently the Proustian solution consists, in so far as it has been examined, in the negation of Time and Death, the negation of Death because the negation of Time. Death is dead because Time is dead." (55–56). By the end we have a soteriology in (what is technically) paraphrase ("by other means," or "by another way" as the magi returned, to restore my optimistic Christian trappings, if you like, here). [I add on 30 May 2025: I don't know how this tracing checks out with the relevant section (near the end) of Being and Time, but what Beckett is really extracting here is an ekstasis within the music of time itself, that music which is not captured in the conventional experience of time that we (as subjects) have built up; and that ekstasis is all the "saving" that we were promised, maybe, and somehow it is enough, and paradise is present precisely as a scansion of the world, within every stitch in its fabric, we're just always skipping right over it, but then what is it like to pop through into it, is it only a slipping glimpse? I don't think so.]

Argument: "Summa," "Contra," etc.
[8 November 2024]
But, yes, I'd like to do all that alright. Even if I have no voice but my own (this question is a question of craft, and since my view on craft is that a real painter swears himself to the length of any diligence, there will be a tool, a solution, because I will find one, because I am sworn to look as hard as is necessary).

And it can go under a subtitle like An argument or indeed something of the form Summa contra __, because after all it is not a work of writerly art but rather a finely-crafted device that, I hope, might, if I craft it finely enough, create a space into which a reading mind can enter and change and become again possible for art (as Eliot would say), a space into which a reading mind can enter and change and thence proceed toward paintings and be receptive to art in such a way that art can realize its transfigurative potential (if I scrape against soteriological language here, it is precisely because I know no avowable way to think of art besides as the realization of the redemptive love of God, the materialization of the Holy Spirit, σημεῖα tout précisément).

Contra what? Contra the null hypothesis that capital has effectively choked out all art, that if any aesthetic beauty remains in the world it is not significant in any tabulation or account of the

resistance to the pernicious effects of broken capitalism, Control, technocratic fascism, etc. Whether or not this null is widely held, it’s resonant with countless appraisals of the day, not all of them aesthetically nihilistic, some more incisive than others, some more optimistic than others; the first to come to mind happens to be Sean Tatol’s.*

Not an experimental novel, then, but an essay, An Argument, an interested and committed work of nonfiction, couched in figurative language that is meant to make the argument more alive, to give it hooks and claws and teeth, because anyone who’d say this form obscures the core thrust contained within would do well, as a first step toward getting on board, to find a way to read clearly.

[* “I guess my thoughts always revolve around why today's art appears so incapable of producing anything new or good, but at the moment I've been trying to parse out something more specific. It's relatively clear why contemporary painting can't match up to its history: the burden of the past is stifling, painters are free to borrow from any tradition but those traditions are kept at arm's length by being borrowed, there's no connoisseurship to distinguish a good painting from a bad one and the bad one is probably easier to sell, etc. Painting is a discipline intrinsically tied to its past, which is to say it's an expression of a received culture, and since our own culture is dismal and confused it makes sense that painters are trapped in a mire. It's less clear why other modes that are less burdened by history like photography, film, installation art, or anything else, aren't faring any better. I don't care about medium-specificity; my concern is with 20th century art that was good by the force of its obviousness and effortlessness, and why even those avenues seems closed to us. To put it another way, the burden of what has been done makes sense, but the reason we can't still invent the undone is less clear.” “Decadence and Poverty: More Art Problems,” 16 October 2024.]”

Doubling the “I”

Maybe everything in the “I” needs to be split in two: Either it is Ludovic speaking in blunt narration of the thoughts of Nemo, or Nemo speaking thus of the acts of Ludovic. (In the finally striking unity, Ludovic Nemo, which is not to be a triumphant final synthesis but rather properly a Correspondance-abstraction: a wrought shade, real, but of a new order never fully assimilable to the priors. And its identity, “Ludovic Nemo,” is to be a specific one, including but not limited to that which it already bears: That painter, Bernard, in the moment at the eye of the vortex whose sweeping arms include Manet and the Impressionists and Cézanne and the “Post-Impressionists” and van Gogh and Gauguin and Cubism (Paris as “city of Cubism” is also “city of this all” but see it, first, in the city where Modigliani’s nudes hang on walls of rooms, the city whose cafés showed the first scenes

Cubistically rendered) (Cubism being not just Picasso and Braque and Gris but also Gertrude Stein and everything herfrom) and the tangential offshoot Catholic recuperation in which Bernard himself would go on to prefigure Mathieu in some strange way and Hantaï in some other strange way and myself in some new and ever stranger way (myself in what way? Catholic in precisely that manner shared by Mallarmé, and Joyce, and Warhol, and Nancy, but also Mathieu and Hantaï, Baudelaire and Bernard). Although I don't want to beat anything over the head with all this. It has to emerge subtly, so subtly, even only in glimpses; I write this firstly just to say that this is in my head, and, as with everything in my head, I need to write it down so that it does not have to become my book or my painting.)

If the "I" is thus doubled, it rises to mind whether there is some matter of opposites whose synthesis would replace each and preserve both, in the manner of a Hegelian dialectic. The best solution to this possibility, I think, is thus. Since I cannot, and for that matter do not want to, single out two "persons" within myself of which a synthesis would be interesting and worthy of playing-out as a work of literature, I want rather to negate the reading of the voices' doubling as a dialectic. I want, that is, to make the two component-I voices indistinguishable, allotting sections to the mouth of each without systematic rules, letting the discrete and specific character of each arise purely by happenstance, and to thus achieve a doubling sheerly for doubling's own sake. (Asle and Asle, for example, in Septology, are easily distinguished by having and not having, respectively, succumbed to alcoholism. There is to be no such handy key distinguishing Ludovic from Nemo, nor, for that matter, distinguishing each from Ludovic Nemo.)

The name of Klossowski already (at the time of the making of this note) appears eleven times in this document, but, with the possible exception of notes I've made elsewhere and did not see through to pasting in here, it seems I have not yet noted one of the dimensions of his work which is most crucial to me.

I am speaking of the arc of the doubling of the self (alternatively, the doubling of the point-of-view; the inadequacy of terms like this is, of course, the central occupation of Klossowski's lifelong engagements), which is perhaps the central longitudinal arc of Le souffleur. The only way to really say what I mean is to quickly read through that whole book, with an eye to the kinesis--not smooth, involving a flickering as well as continuous parallaxes--of the relation of K. and Theodore Lacase; but a good effort at an approximation can be found in the resumé of the book given on pp. 35ff. of Les Doublures: manuscrits du Souffleur et autres documents (https://archive.org/details/pierre-klossowski-doublures-ismael).

If one good reason for trying to paint everything I will paint through the sieve or crible of an “autobiography of Ludovic Nemo” can be put most vaguely in terms of my interest in sustaining the life of all the animating forces which lay behind the recent wave of interest in the literary form grouped famously inadequately under the label “autofiction,” my vaguely avowed but really real interest in the real & not-exhausted tensions which were activated by the remarkably disparate works known thereby,
then,
perhaps a second good reason can be read into the fact that Huysmans’s des Esseintes was only able to come to life, as it were, i.e. to be what he was for Mallarmé, for Wilde, for everyone on down to Michael Krebber, because of the form Huysmans gave to his content; which is to speak with absurdly inadequate terms, so allow me to rephrase:

In giving us des Esseintes, Huysmans performed a technique akin to that which lies near the heart of cartoons’ appeal according to this reviewer of Cosima von Bonin’s exhibition Songs for Gay Dogs in Flash Art which I listened to last night while driving back from Daphne’s apartment where I met her and Bella for Spanish wine in a stolen or gifted (I don’t know because there’s one of each) Lipp glass, stout pie, and peppermint bark on the way home from plankmaking in the dark after work: “These cartoon icons were designed to be emotionally expressive, and their global ubiquity gives viewers an immediate point of access. Von Bonin uses these characters (and many more) as blank canvases for feeling: it’s easier to relate to pain and strife when it’s projected onto a Looney Tunes character instead of an actual person. In Open Your Shirt Please (2019), Daffy Duck — famous for his on-screen neurosis and egotism — battles encroaching negative space that threatens to consume him across five velvet-covered panels. He eventually loses the fight to the shadows, resulting in a single all-black rectangle. As Clara Drechsler writes in her essay ‘Demon Clearing Service’ for the exhibition’s catalogue, ‘There’s no one who would rather be Daffy than Cosima. Sadly, the requisite qualities are not sufficiently pronounced in her. But perhaps they do share the same demons.’”

As an aside I note that what I have had in my head as my reason for studying after Ren and Stimpy has much more to do with formalism, with the (implied, but for that no less real) movement of bodies through planes, than with parasocial empathy, or identification, or projection, or whatever concoction thereof is at issue for this reviewer and possibly for von Bonin. But perhaps none of these dimensions can ever have been fully absent.

On Proust’s “Esquisse pour les deux côtés,”
in my folio classique edition 591ff.

From the short introduction, first, a phrase which makes me think directly of my two voices, Ludovic and Nemo, whether or not I end up giving them the voices “I” and “he” (and so for the latter putting into the third person, in a direct transposition, half the mass of things I will say) or find some other way to consummate the doubling which I’ve been thinking I need: Theirs will be one of the “major symmetries” of my work, and the value of this phrase is the view of the work-object that it entails. “L’opposition du côté de chez Swann et du côté de Guermantes constitue l’une des symétries majeures de la Recherche” (591).

The introduction also provides another striking turn of phrase: “la réminiscence [provoquée par le heurt d’une fourchette sur une assiette, etc.] donne lieu à un exposé en forme de l’esthétique proustienne” (592). Perhaps this “Proustian aesthetic” is the kernel which the following enshrines.

I pause to import words from Walter Benjamin that came before me on 20 December 2024.
These words I have emphatically taken for granted; how? Via Prof. Landy, in some way I took to heart without preserving a citational tag? In any case, I accept them newly on Benjamin’s (not absolute) authority: “What Baudelaire meant by correspondances can be described as an experience which seeks to establish itself in crisis-proof form. [Crisis-proof: Hence the insistence on reality, explicability, demonstrability; or, perhaps, the component of Symbolist aesthetics that Annick Ettlin outsources to “pragmatism.”] This is possible only within the realm of ritual [hold on:]. If it transcends this realm, it presents itself as the beautiful. In the beautiful, ritual value appears as the value of art. [So we end up with ritual value--e.g., the axiomatic adoption of a framework such as la peinture (looking with a history-cultivated body-eye at a flat surface covered with pastes and hung on a wall)--indispensable to beauty. At a glance, this resembles conservatism, or resembles a window through which conservative attitudes can climb; but this is a mere pseudomorphism, because it is really, here, a matter of règles du jeu, whether those rules be the framework of the Mass or the systems which would become the substrate, the playing field, of Jasper Johns]” (“On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” in The Writer of Modern Life (Harvard 2006) 198).
That was, mostly, a detour. The main import from Benjamin is this one: He quotes Proust, what he calls a “confessional motto for Proust’s work.” “In Baudelaire ... these reminiscences are even more numerous. It is obvious they do not occur by chance, and this, to my mind, is what gives them crucial importance. No one else pursues the interconnected correspondances with such leisurely care, fastidiously yet nonchalantly—in a woman's scent, for instance, in the fragrance of her hair or her breasts—correspondances which then inspire him with lines like ‘the azure of the vast, vaulted sky’ or ‘a harbor full of flames and masts’” (qtd. 199).
I pay particular attention to “No one else pursues the interconnected

correspondances with such leisurely care, fastidiously yet nonchalantly—in a woman's scent, for instance, in the fragrance of her hair or her breasts"; here he enshrines an posture, obviously intrinsic to--but not completely reducible to--that of the flâneur. I link one more Benjamin line, adding exercises to this posture. He speaks of Proust's "lifelong exercises in which he strove to bring to light past things saturated with all the reminiscences that had penetrated his pores during the sojourn of those things in his unconscious" (196).

These exercises, and this posture, are what I find in the esquisse I was just looking at.*

I assemble all this just to say that my own aesthetic practice has long since assumed this very same form. (Whether or not this was programmatic, as it apparently first wasn't and then later was, for Proust; and also, I've developed a sort of facility with this that I could even aspire to think of as a craft)--of course, all along with the pursuit and working of "adorning so" (Cavalcanti) the canzone, the painting, the epistolary prism, adornments which may take the form of maintaining structures from among which one could speak of "one of the major symmetries" of the work.)

[* For example: "C'est de ces promenades solitaires que je fis à l'automne du côté de Meséglise que date une des lois vraiment immuables de ma vie spirituelle. Tout d'un coup tandis qu'une image passait sous mes yeux ou dans ma pensée, je sentais à un plaisir particulier, à une sorte de profondeur, qu'il y avait quelque chose sous elle, une réalité plus profonde. Je ne savais quoi. Je gardais précieusement l'image dans ma pensée, je marchais avec précaution comme de peur de la faire envoler. Quelquefois je me persuadais que ce n'était qu'à la maison devant mon papier que je pourrais l'ouvrir avec sécurité, et trouver son contenu intellectuel. C'était un clocher que j'avais vu filer dans le lointain, une fleur de sauge, une tête de jeune fille. Je sentais que là-dessous il y avait une impression, et je revenais à la maison rapportant mon impression vivante cachée sous cette image qui la signifiait comme on rapporte sous l'herbe qui la garde fraîche une carpe qu'on a pêchée. Arrivé à la maison j'ouvrais mon panier, je tâchais de soulever l'herbe et de saisir le poisson s'il ne s'était pas échappé en route. Jamais ce n'est la grandeur, la valeur rationnelle d'une idée qui m'a depuis donné la sensation de sa beauté, qui m'a dit: voilà, il y a du beau, du vrai là-dessous, il y a quelque chose à creuser. C'est quelque image qui était a priori sans valeur intellectuelle quelque clocher filant dans une perspective, quelque fleur de sauge, quelque tête de jeune fille, quelque forme qui s'imposait à moi" (592-593). I cannot help but wonder whether the physical action, the practice, the craft, which the artist performs in this capacity has something in common with the activity of the patient of Freudian (Lacanian too?) analysis. One finds something in the flux of sensation (which flux is the confluence of the sometimes-apparently (but only apparently) mirror-still waters of memory and the sometimes-unbearably-turbulent currents of present experience), and one preserves it, splays it in words (in paint if one could! Maybe

someday; now, my paint doesn't go an inch to faithfully deposit the distillate (insight? memory?) while my words can go far enough to make me feel, often though not always, complete). The words I copied above from the esquisse just name what is meant by the côté de Guermantes. That of Combray is, so briefly, the mémoire involontaire epiphany, represented this time not by the madeleine in the teacup but by the clinking of knife against picnic plate which superposes the present moment with a past one; the past one is one of surpassing spleen, but in this superposition it becomes the substrate of a new moment of profound worth--which, incidentally, commands the artist immediately into a monkish summons to his pen and paper, to record (594-595). I ask, not urgently, what use there is in the specificity of this dutiful reporting to transcription, if not just to establish, on a theoretical plane, the sheer fact that such a moment of transport is possible to persons.]

Voice, interest, legibility

I feel I might not have done enough to assure avoidance of complete obscurity, impenetrability, inexplicable essayism, etc.

Urge to supply some kind of Kafka-Krohn-Bertram intrigue and tension, inexorable and unnameable pull, in place, perhaps, of the familiar set-piece plot that the roman policier suppled Melville's Samouraï or that variations on the romance arc seem to provide many novels from the last 50 years. (This function has, in the past, been satisfactorily fulfilled by a reminiscent invalid (La recherche); a reminiscent writer shut in a somewhat absurd room and sending letters (Murnane, Inland); and a reminiscent perambulatory painter moving from an exterior-feeling compulsion on the shores of fjords and in the snowy streets of a city (Septology). My reminiscent sleeps and wakes and dreams (perhaps) a clearing; but what I intend to interpellate among this routine of his, again and again, is too various to cohere, lacks the familiar shape and sites of a childhood that Proust and Murnane and Fosse all supply. So I need to impose some other structure. But what is it? Maybe it is the painting of the painting I just painted, which could appear on the cover or not at all or in replacement (I don't like this option) or, maybe best of all, only in intricate description, on the far side of all the leadup I encoded in what I called "Lover," and interspliced among the love letters which establish the rapport (give a texture; some texture, not enough; I need to supply more detail: Supply the fact that it is painted in the lover's absence, supply the dust and the cold and the neglect of the (my, not Rivette's Frenhofer's) abandoned studio, supply my working-through of all the steps without which I could not begin painting (as did Frenhofer, at nearly unbearable length), supply my memory, just after duskfall, before turning on the room's lights, of taking the panel up to my eyes like a cup, like before I've lifted hips like a cup, lifted mandible like a cup, the coming together of lips to lips, being flooded with all that's been made of the uncanny likeness of the texture of dried skeins of oilpant to that of human skin, peau,

sensible, sensitive, the ambiguous transpiration of contact of lips (and therewith passage/traversal of orifice threshold) to leaden paint, fragrant, oil of linseed, huile d'amande, cooler on the lips than plywood, now warmer, war like water that something lives in, now unbearably hot, but healing, searing as though from the charcoals of the censer (hearth?) at the hands of seraphim (cherubim?). Do not supply the fact of the photograph, only the actual acts of brush and eyes; make it so that what was really a photograph is in Nemo's mind, imagination, perhaps) of painter and lover.)

Or, the thought that the intrigue, the tension, this pull, could come from orbiting around a central figure of an infant, an unknowable mind, an other person itself, of which one's lover is, among all other things, perhaps first of all, a shadow. (So, yes, I think that the recurrence of the infant in center-field closeup can be superposed together with the intent pursuit of the painting.)

Baby vision and all it was to be.
Ludovic's or Nemo's daughter? I don't think so. Just an infant, but not just a child, either, that has just happened into his life, like in McCarthy's The Road.

I believe that I can write this infant because of the thoughts and feelings that Fennec taught me to think and feel.

Guignol, Lacan; Ubu, Pantagruel

Reassertion of my interest in Rabelais's Pantagruel and guignol theater (mediated/distilled by a Mathis-Collins-type lens especially).

(The pairing is doubly twined: Recall that Collins's 15 Orient exhibition elicited the adjective "Rabelasian" [sic.] from Sean Tatol; and also, Alfred Jarry enshrines their pairing in his Ubu Roi: that play is considered a descendent of Gargantua and Pantagruel's comic grotesquerie, and Jarry stated that his intention for the play was to "write a guignol." These seem to be the two main sources of Ubu's DNA, aside from the composite of Shakespeare's tragedies which supply the plot, and the Sophoclean titles.)

Ubu also makes glow again the net of figures I can't seem to put down: puppets (special to Rilke); commedia dell'arte (made alive by Picasso's rose paintings, which, incidentally, were also special to Rilke); and Le pitre châtié, which is perhaps the ur-site of what I am about to point to in the next paragraph.

In particular, I want my culling of plot devices, character types, problemata, and textures to be lifted from Rabelais and guignol but through the distilling/rarefaction lens of these two essays: "Alas, Poor Yorick! … The Being of Spirit is a Bone" by Nathan Brown and "The Master Is Undead" by Mladen Dolar, both in Problemi International no. 6.* They impose a Lacanian angle, a fixation on certain concepts, problemata, registers of abstraction, that I want to mark & color everything I cull from these sources. I feel, among other things, that this will put me in direct contact with the Hantaï of

that Warnock essay on the Femelles miroirs and those Meuns, and with the café conversation from Agnès Varda about men and women and bulls in Miró, and with the specific Hemingway of The Sun Also Rises, and with the Godard of Prénom: Carmen (with its quartet and its hotel room) and Pierrot le Fou (with the scene in the hideout apartment: its shirt and, most of all, its paintings).

[* I found this journal, I forget how, by way of Alenka Zupančič, in whom I am again interested because of Olivia Kan-Sperling; Kan-Sperling's Heavy Traffic story had such an excellent style and execution that I felt breathtaken; I went back to her Lacanian (Zupančič-Žižek) piece that spiraled outward from that very striking Abercrombie publication, and intend to embark therefrom on a full pass of Zupančič's What Is Sex?, whose energy and force I hope to maintain in paintings that are more sustainable than the new one I've just made, paintings which, perhaps, extend the Francis Bacon that made Bertolucci** make Last Tango in Paris (which may be the same Bacon that made Deleuze write Logique de sens); I've recently learned from the painter Kira Scerbin how Bacon can be extended--not that I want to extend him in the same way that she does, but that I want to have the same area of contact with his work that she has, and extend from him there in my own direction.]

[** I cannot help but add the perhaps paranoid (in the sense of hallucinatory) doubling of an extant link: in the standard account, what Bertolucci took from Pasolini was the sheer texture that is directly analogous between the Pasolini film he worked on (Accattone?) and the first film he (Bertolucci) made thereafter--the fact that these two films obviously acted in exactly the same world, etc. But I have something else. Of all that Pasolini has done to me, nothing was so devastating (I recall Kissick: art "should bring us to our knees" and "destroy reality") as the bowling-ball-to-gut, dissolving-of-brain experience of watching Salò. Perhaps the greatness of Bertolucci's and Brando's and Schneider's Last Tango is that it was in touch with precisely the same truth: that sex is, before anything else, the horizon of the person, the beyond of selfhood, the destroying of identity. And this truth seems to be the one which defines Zupančič's specific position, the one which she uniquely records in What is Sex?.]

As a superfluous appendix: I paste the abstracts of those two Problemi International papers.

Brown:

"This paper addresses the relation between famous phrases in Shakespeare and Hegel—"Alas, Poor Yorick!" and "The being of spirit as a bone"—
which punctuate reflections upon the materiality of spirit. Meditating upon the challenge these enunciations pose to the living thought of dead
matter, the author takes Hegel's infinite judgment as an incitement to consider the problem of existence in Hamlet at the level of the material occupation of space. From this perspective, the article argues that

Hamlet is pervasively concerned with the metaphysical riddles, political implications, and meta-theatrical effects of spirit's spatial existence—not only in the graveyard scene or in the play's famous philosophical soliloquys, but also in its subplots and apparently minor episodes. Property, warfare, station, the relation between nature and artifice, the material supports of writing and desire are inscribed in spatial economies of displacement, exchange, and dissolution that persistently accompany and conjoin the play's intimate psychological dramas and overarching political framework. Ultimately, this is a matter of what it means for bodies to be displayed on a stage."

Dolar:

"The paper takes as its starting point the anecdote of Freud's visit to Slovenia in April 1898, when he by coincidence met dr. Karl Lueger, the burgomaster of Vienna and the notorious antisemitic populist leader whom none other than Hitler later took as the role model. Lueger represented at the time a new type of the figure of the master, after the demise of the traditional paternal figures which served as the models of authority. The anecdote can be taken as emblematic of the political role of psychoanalysis which at its inception had to confront a new type of authority and a logic which stretches from that time up to the present.

The paper further considers two cases of new grotesque masters after the political shift of modernity, Marx's confrontation with Louis Bonaparte in The Eighteenth Brumaire, and the fictional figure of Ubu proposed by Alfred Jarry (roughly at the time of Freud's anecdotical encounter of Lueger) and which Michel Foucault took as the paradigm of "grotesque sovereignty." The second part of the paper tries to figure out how the seemingly excessive figures of new populist masters fit into the structure of what Lacan described as the discourse of the university, which presented for him the discourse that subtends the social ties after the advent of modernity. The populist masters can be taken as the symptoms of that constellation, following Lacan's gloomy predictions of the rise of segregation on the basis of university discourse, with the advancement of science, the common markets and the spread of universalization."

Diagram

[The actual original text that spills off to the right is contained in this document, but an updated version exists under “baths” subheading below.]
The thought is that each night--the space spanning the endpoints of each horizontal line in this diagram--could be a dissolution of self, and the centerpoint of each horizontal line would be a concentration of self into an utterance, a finely-wrought multifariously-determined work (which, in turn, becomes prismatic, but which, in its own becoming-into-being, is the momentary concentration of as much as possible of the kaleidoscopic out-refractions of the prismatic self).

The space around the endpoints is the sleep; the loss of self in these cases is the state of falling asleep (more or less literally--perhaps it ought to be rather literal at first) in water, which is also sacramental (it is, in every case, baptism; a Catholic sacrament is the deepest possible gesture (I say “gesture” because it is a movement of the person, the body-mind, only visible in the body and yet involving all of the body and therefore also all of the mind because, while not reducible to the body, the mind is nowhere disconnected from the body)).

The centerpoints of the lines, the concentrations into “an utterance,” are not just the letters but also works of art in any medium, as long as they are in some medium (meaning: legible). So, for example, a painting can attain to the same “utterance” status as one of the letters; as can a little gemlike set-piece like the Samouraï example here (that’s what is clipped in the blue; which I describe thus: “On this day, the letter arrives as a prop in a Neo-noir sequence whose postures, events, facial expressions, shot-framings, will all be lifted from that Delon-Melville in a manner which I now realize is similar to what Kan-Sperling did for Heavy Traffic. Nevertheless: At a certain point Delon will scrawl a note; it won't be clear at first what he's written, but it will turn out that it was the latest in the series of Ludovic Nemo's notes.”).

These are the only moments (and all the moments) when the self is interpretable as unified, harmonic, & total. So, really, one could better picture each horizontal line as a braid of sorts, of two-ish strands; the distinguishable strands are the perceptibly-disconnected separable constituent components of the self (all the disconnects prove them), here represented by the duality (plurality) of Ludovic and Nemo; they converge (fully and precisely) only at the very center, where they become one, Ludovic Nemo (the name of the “author” or “artist” par excellence--the only sort of “construction” of “unified self” I can avow. Meanwhile I always avow the notion of “person” as that toward which the only possible posture is adoration; thus “person” must necessarily be kept excruciatingly open as a concept, extremely generous in the plotting of its bounds. I’m a person even when I am asleep, even when I am incoherent, even when I despair, even when I am abjected, Controlled, etc., whereas in all of these cases I am not capable of real self-gathering utterances (capable of uttering prismatic art-objects)).

Perhaps the best way to write the edge-of-line sleep-in-water portions is to write them in Fosse's soporific dream sentences, basic, long, spare, perhaps redoubling in doubt, open to a dream logic, but exuding simplicity, as though the barest simplest possible transcription of material-tending phenomenon of the immersion in question (making my point-of-view as close as I can get it to "objective," reduced as close to mindless body as possible). Here is how, in these moments, the Fosse oneiric-voice allows the "braid" to fray into Ludovic, and Nemo, and (therefrom) into an uncountable haze of different "I": This dream plane is where everything I think of as "my memories" exists "at once," "side by side," with a connector-logic (nebeneinander), not a sequence-logic (nacheinander). So I can freely float, while narrating in these parts, from one immersion-site (one bath, one spa-town, one baptism, one ocean) to any other, and call "myself" (whenever "I" must be called) at each moment variously "Ludovic" or "Nemo" or "Ludovic or Nemo" or even "Tom" or "Thomas" or "twin" or "Paul" or "doubter" or "lover" or any of the other masks (puppets, fards) I've ever sparked.

Meanwhile the things I can avow as "letters"--the paintings or stories or whatever utterances convene a harmonic, unified "Ludovic Nemo"--ought to be as multiply-determined, as positively Nabokov-Mallarmé-encrusted with as many transposed intricacies, as many superposed planes of action and registers of significance as possible (because this is precisely where the Eucharist-boulanger dynamic of all-affects-all is most acutely in effect: this, that is, is the aesthetic site). And if I need pictures of who does this: It's that body of Ludovic Nemo who holds the paints, who stands before the panel; it's a boxer (I choose this figure among the several athlete-figures who mean much to me; maybe I'd choose the swimmer, but then I'd really be crossing my wires) whose body's-and-point-of-view's entire history was always just a handful of intersecting lines of action and trains of thought whose every specificity (every decision--it would be fun to enumerate them, but I'd need a stand-in to source the textures of the homes and the meals and the training sessions and the childhoods and the relationships and the ideologies and the visions and the desires and the fixations and all the breathing and the becoming-calm and the final becoming-ready) was keyed exclusively to this moment, to put the body-and-point-of-view into the state of perfection-upon-entering-the-ring, to win.

(Problemata emerge, loose ends which do not, I think, necessitate a rewriting of the schema above. There is the obvious unattainability of harmonically unified "Ludovic Nemo" author status for every moment at which my general "I" would really have to take up paints, and work.* But maybe the usefulness of the showing of the true motion (the "music," the putting into motion of these difficult-to-even-image things, as in Sein und Zeit pt. 2) of how real persons make real beauty and thereby really make life livable, showing that motion truly in an oscillatory work like this, outweighs the possible misconstrual that I'm theorizing something impossible here (i.e. the misconstrual that the painter or the boxer is some superman that I'm

either perversely arrogant to aspire to, or ironically depicting). [* For another strange, but important, example to illustrate this tension: One's most unified, most concentrated, most central all-in-one moment of selfhood is the act of love; but this is also, famously, the moment of the complete loss of self, the complete dissolving of self into--into what? Into ecstasy? Into the abstract "You" of agapic Love? There are choice others who have put this into words worth retaining])

Letters (constituted selves of Ludovic Nemo)

Perhaps this is a good list for the "letters" column (the central column, the avatars for "Ludovic Nemo," for authorship, for concentration of being into singular (in the sense of consummately specific) acts of inscription-into-materiality):
[0.: The existing Proscenium, Ludovic Nemo penning a letter, seated with his back to the armoire?]
1. The painter, as I paint, now, with this Klimt-blumengarten hanging on my wall (as it has for the whole duration in which I came to understand it in this way) (I think I ought to reserve a consideration that the painter-figure should maybe not be among this list-of-twenty at all) (Leaning toward not having this be part of the twenty or at least not here, but, if I do depict this painter's process, I want to do so by way of all the notes I was making for myself about the Mandorlas and the Bonnard-hand drawings, all those protocols and Mondrian and even the thoughts on Mark Grotjahn: All the plans, directives, and premonitions, the aspirations and foresights and the scaffolding.) And if I dare speak into form this avatar mine, dare I also impute to him traits of body I hold tenderly in the mind: Anything I assembled in images with long coats, scarves, postures? Or the bird-shouldered image from that Krohn story: "People often mistook his difference for a superior intellect and would clap him on the back, only to quickly recoil, feeling how sharp and thin he was under his sweater. / My boyfriend's face was carved with the sangfroid of a street vendor slicing peppers with a penknife, letting the pieces drop and fry in the dirty hot oil. My boyfriend struggled to open jars and pick up credit cards from the floor." Or again the bird-shouldered image from one of Joyce's pennyeach pomes, "On the Beach at Fontana": "From whining wind and colder / Grey sea I wrap him warm / And touch his trembling fineboned shoulder / And boyish arm." (The next (the last) stanza of the same implicates too another defining trait of mine, my everpresent almost-overwhelming sense of fear: "Around us fear, descending / Darkness of fear above / And in my heart how deep unending / Ache of love!" I can't help adding more, from another work in the same volume, "Tutto è Sciolto": Again fear grips the "I" and it is, again, me, in certain alternatives ("universes") my conduct with Bella went this way: "The clear young eyes' soft look, the candid brow, / The fragrant hair, / Falling as through the silence falleth

now / Dusk of the air. [A simile of falling, in a way alike to the one of descending in “Fontana”; I’d do well to supplement all my images of “mist,” which “pervades,” with similes like these two (too).] // Why then, remembering those shy / Sweet lures, repine / When the dear love she yielded with a sigh / Was all but thine?” And even more. “Simples” for its epigram and the intensity contained in this prayer: “Be mine, I pray, a waxen ear / To shield me from her childish croon / And mine a shielded heart for her / Who gathers simples of the moon.” (This is the one he opened with an epigram “O bella bionda, / Sei come l’onda!”) And, lastly, “She Weeps over Rahoon” for its “Danny Boy” grief, the most beautiful kind (posture) I’ve always held as the only way I know to think of grief: “Rain on Rahoon falls softly, softly falling, / Where my dark lover lies. / Sad is his voice that calls me, sadly calling, / At grey moonrise. // Love, hear thou / How soft, how sad his voice is ever calling, / Ever unanswered and the dark rain falling, / Then as now. // Dark too our hearts, O love, shall lie and cold / As his sad heart has lain / Under the moongrey nettles, the black mould / And muttering rain.” (This last nature morte, the moongrey nettles and the black mould and the muttering rain (all over sad dark heart): They remind me, in texture, of Saoirse Bertram.
2. The boxer (Should he, and all of these, be named “Ludovic Nemo” too? Maybe when he finally does enter the wring, that is when he writes the second letter, and after the letter it is a matter of lifting the belt (should this be a moment of comic exaggeration?), retreating to dissolution in some bath or other. Or: Have this come maybe fourth in the order, after three-ish that are technically ambiguous but seem like they invite interpretation as unambiguous aesthetic triumphs (a painter liking his own work, a poet liking his own painting), such that when there is a jump-cut through the boxing match itself, the reader expects the belt to be lifted; but what is found instead is the smelling salts, a trainer’s padded table, icemaker in the corner, a locker room or wherever the loser-by-knockout goes to be revived. The boxer can get enfleshing material from Belmondo (he was a boxer; I can use what I’ve written about muscularity as well as what’s been written about him in obituaries blogs and even Cahiers) as well as, maybe, that Irish John Wayne movie. Here’s another thing that can happen in passing: R. Home, a man of law. Every boxer needs a loyal lawyer, lest he end up in Ireland like John Wayne. The lawyer R. Home is as loyal as they come, owing to Ludovic a debt of life; (Make it so that Ludovic had stepped in to save R. Home on a dark night on a hard sidewalk in front of a loud bar on the naval base side of San Diego, Ludovic visiting R. Home while on some form of leave; Ludovic was able to intervene soon enough to preserve R. Home’s life, but not his sight, arriving between the combatants before the coup de grace but after an impact between the rear of R. Home’s skull and the aforementioned sidewalk; for the altercation R. Home was later determined to be solely responsible, and, as the common consequence of his culpability and the new development of his physical unwholeness, R. Home was not permitted to stay in the service and found himself in the legal profession.) (What

he says to him is something from Homer, some kernel I glean about the eternal ritual & aesthetic dimension of what I'm here calling boxing; in particular, it's about the match between Ajax and Odysseus by the ships; Ludovic Nemo is to be cast as Ajax, premonition of defeat but also prompting for his striking of certain postures I find in Exekias, which I elaborated in my second piece of writing for Prof. Maxmin.)
3. Rilke, maybe, the image of him writing his elegies or sonnets, that outpouring of creativity; I don't want to stage it in that Thurn-und-Taxis Gothic setting, but still, I think, Rilke's own evocations of his conditions of writing would probably be good to appropriate. Maybe he warms up with drafts that are real Rilke fragments, but when he finally sets his finally-luminous pen to the paper, what comes out is the third letter. And I think he is still named Ludovic Nemo, and he is still writing to Belle. Here is how I will pull off an embodiment (really an impersonation, as with a puppet) of Rilke. First, I will (having brought the "linearized spa town" fully up to date) rationalize (je vais raisonner) the whole "Rilke" line: I will go through everything I've ever cached away pertaining to Rilke, and I will put it all in line, rearranging to group like with like, so that I have a clear picture of all of what of him I am in this passage to make present.* And then, here is how I will do so: First I will read Gass's work on him all the way through, and then if I need yet more of his voice I will turn to his letters and/or (if I want to try to adopt his prose voice at all) to Malte. [* Among which, no doubt, must be this line from Hartman, which richly and gorgeously overcodes all the sleep which is to happen in this oscillation: "What is the meaning of this sleep that must precede and follow such apperception? It is a readiness of the body and a suspense of the will enabling total reception from the senses. If the poet has been entirely receptive of the event, he may experience its unconscious or involuntary maturing, until the girl appears once more, this time fulfilled. " (87 - 88).]
4. Perhaps this is the right sequencing: Now comes the Delon-Melville moment, the neo-noir predicament, clearly formulaic, clearly imaginative, clearly a proxy, making clear the mythic character of the plane where all twenty of these letter-writings converge (where all twenty really make sense together, i.e. they only really all belong together on this imaginative plane).
5. Rabelais. How many figures for authorship are there? Perhaps I really need to assemble them all and to name each, in turn, Ludovic Nemo. Each time, bringing up just what from the notion of each means so much to me, what it is that comes back to me when again and again each of these comes back to me. And will it grow tiresome that each, at the climactic moment, just pens another of my (banal, but do they come off that way? Do they come off adequately or serviceably in any way at all?) letters to "Belle." Maybe it's growing tiresome; but maybe, here, I start listing them, knowing that, from this point, they really might not stick, the exercise might begin to feel too tryingly Modernist, like Beckett's lesser works or like the long chapters in mid-late Ulysses that just drag on. If that's the case, reconsider this; but, if not: Rabelais. If Rabelais: Then make Mathis Collins,

and his very re-Symbolist game of permutation of those personages and verbs and elements and textures at 15 Orient, into the lens through which anything I glean from Rabelais must be projected, just as Nancy's Visitation will be primarily the lens through which I will present a refracted Pontormo (though in Pontormo's case I'll also make present the texture of his dietary and health-wise and habitual and social life, by means of his giornali (sp.?).
6. Hantaï.
7. Cavalcanti.
8. Mallarmé.
9. Reverdy when he coined his definition of "image": And here, perhaps, the "author" is actually Reverdy-Breton-Schuster-Hantaï.
10. Jasper Johns as ur-re-Symbolist--that is, Jasper Johns as described by Sean Tatol?
11. Just any of the Troubadours?
12. Pound
13. Balthus
14. The Sicilian poet court
15. Any of my paradiso terrestre contemporary painters? Any, or several at once for purposes of disguise?
16. Pontormo with his diet, journal, and work on the eventually-flooded chapel? Or is he at work on the Visitation, and do I use Nancy's "Visitation" as a projection-lens furnishing much of the necessary wording to show what Pontormo was really up to (and do I take the necessary time, here, to set up the Vasarian "transalpine" intrigue and inaugurate a certain stretch of revisionist painting history here)?
17. If the answer to the last question above is "yes," then: Grünewald
18. [Insert anyone else I feel is indispensable to a "transalpine" arc if that's what I think should happen here]
19. Jan van Eyck
20. In no particular order (only some of the above was in any particular order): Nabokov weaving one story into another, and Nabokov making his centaur-work, his "merman," with its ultimately-convergent but for long rhizomatically-told (i.e. footnote-structured) encrusted crystalline object in literary form;
21. maybe even Saoirse Bertram or Tao Lin, with their respective means of excruciation (Bertram the tearing abstraction, Lin the drugs and ennui and everything from 2013 that in 2018 he was recovering from) and their respective crystalline instant-condensations of either cold-air clarity (Bertram) or twinkling beauty (Lin);
22. Bernard himself? Or anyone important (Cézanne, Gauguin, Bernard, Bonnard, Matisse, any of my dear Picassos (the Cubist, the one in Antibes, or the one in the garret painting Boy with pipe), etc. (esp. if I am engaging a revision of history of la Peinture from a "transalpine" angle) from what T.J. Clark called "french painting": "the line from Corot to Matisse, from Sardanapalus to Ma Jolie"? I lean toward "no": I don't really have any specific bone to pick right now in any of these stories of or moments from "Modernism" as such
23. There are countless who I simply haven't named. Pantheonization is

tiresome and always seems to run the risk of embarrassment or uselessness or both

Baths

I; Wi Spa
The experience of the ritual moving around, the deep bodily registration of it all which is on the same order as Hantaï's posture-conscious "apprendre aux genoux" and Rilke's acute sensitivity to bodily realities as the ones that all realities have to be registered in/as; also the fact of nudity, which I can make present via cutouts from "Lover" and from the Greek pose entering the shower after Cameron park

II; Rilke's Mountain Gentian
Not sure what exactly needs to fill in here

III; Nostalghia
Tarkovsky's Nostalghia's pool

IV; Kundera
Kundera's Tereza's town's pools, as filmed by Kaufman, say

V; Budapest
Something in Budapest, maybe something Fr. Bernard would have known

VI; Austerlitz's Marienbad
Is there enough there?

VII; Mastroianni's 8 1/2 town
Is there enough?

VIII; Guatemala [?]
The volcanic river eddies in Guatemala (?) that the Cistercian alum told us about and that Sam mentioned

IX; Proust Normandy
M. Legrandin's Balbec? Add Corbière's drawings and paintings?

X; Rayon vert
Rohmer's Le Rayon vert's Biarritz

XI; Cap Ferret
Pines and Cocteau and Nancy's address and the nudist colony I read about (was it near there?)

XII; Le Corbusier
Le Corbusier's cabanon and imagining a walk down to the beach below it (and did he die there?) (And, maybe, imagining building it for myself--not the same plan, just the same structure, the same generating principle)

XIII; Big Sur
Running into the enormously powerful Pfeiffer Beach Pacific (collapse into it my image of that so-distant cliff beach at Na Pali) holding Danny

XIV; Graduation
Drunkenly running into Half Moon Bay with Danny in my arms

XV; Mission Bay Fog
That otherworldly day with the fog on Mission Beach, and going into the ocean until I couldn't see shore and only had sense (sens) from the oriented rhythm of the risings and fallings -- Also how the waves would be breaking for something like a hundred yards; talk about this and the reefs at Cardiff in that deep gray, sky of sharkskin or sealskin. And also, I think, here, is where I should activate a dream of myself as a merman. Merman but also Poseidon and Proteus (that old man on the strand (?) changing shape like a dangerous wheel even as Ludovic Nemo does from day to day; his plurivocality is both his strength and his tragedy, his gift and his determinative curse, his horizon). I paste two things toward this end: first, notes from just a couple days ago; second, a very important scene of a bath from Ulysses, which may be from either “Lotos-Eaters” or “Proteus” (I can’t remember (It turns out it’s Lotus-Eaters)). The notes: “On the rear cover of my decrepit gold-orange (my color words are pathetically elementary in comparison to their expectation. What I really mean would be “saffron” were it not for the from-within illumined gradation of the breast of the oriole, which makes “oriole” the only right word here) Berkley edition of Pale Fire, Mary McCarthy says “this merman of the deep” (after calling the book a “centaur-work of Nabokov, half poem, half prose”), and the phrase lodges deep, deep. / Encrusted with all the coralline lines--undersea, not maritime--that ornament Shakespeare’s Tempest (perhaps the most Mallarméan out of his plays

for its ethereal sumptuosity, despite Mallarmé's own greater use found for Hamlet), this figure, the merman, hybrid, athletic, regal, piscine (I mean ichthyc), gray or silver beyond the green, desirous in the warm cold blood beneath scales and in the limbs crevassed by salt dust, / Is Ludovic a merman? or is Nemo? Verne makes this latter move almost too easy. / I think of the day on a boat on Mission Bay, when my sex first felt it was itself. I dreamed "Apollo," I dreamed "Aphrodite," and I dreamed "Poseidon." There are cellic sound-strains these chords seesaw against that are deeper and truer than the obvious ludic hubris. [Quite rich illustrations follow.]" The Joyce: "... Always passing, the stream of life, which in the stream of life we trace is dearer thaaan them all. / Enjoy a bath now: clean trough of water, cool enamel, the gentle tepid stream. This is my body. / He foresaw his pale body reclined in it at full, naked, in a womb of warmth, oiled by scented melting soap, softly laved. He saw his trunk and limbs riprippled over and sustained, buoyed lightly upward, lemonyellow: his navel, bud of flesh: and saw the dark tangled curls of his bush floating, floating hair of the stream around the limp father of thousands, a languid floating flower" (V.563–572, on p. 71 in our Vintage copies).

XVI; Mission Bay two sunsets
That otherworldly day with the two sunsets on Mission Beach (between this and the last, I can tell a pretty good story of how it is that perfect love can first not be there and then be there); maybe blink years forward--just a flash--to the mica on the Fourth of July

XVII; Finland
Finland maybe, the reindeer-populated mushroom-laced wastes beyond Uppsala

XVIII; Japan
The Youtube of that Ryokan: This against certain notions I'd taken from Miyazaki, and, with the tunnel, deepened by thoughts of the Czech silver mine (just the thought I recorded) and Stendhal's Salzburg crystal flower and the rose empyrean that that has to coincide with (It will be played like this: Someone is going to sleep in that Ryokan, having enjoyed its mats and the magic library-allure array (there's a nice Greek word for this: panoply? Phantasmagoria?) of scents from tags or capsules, and dreams of having walked into that cave under it earlier, and in the dream the memory of that real tunnel becomes first the Czech silver mine made dreamlike by a crab-walking meander through the nebeneinander dream-logic of that painting of it; and then all this is capped off by one last instantaneous deepest image: Stendhal's Salzburg's crystal flower become the Dantean rose empyrean, by the instantaneous metamorphic crystallization of Love.

XIX; Poggio
"As Poggio has remarked": All that. Maybe I can make, in one last gasp, some glorious Pound-scaffolded re-Symbolist vision that lends newly deep substance to this "espresso cup" oscillation

XX; Canterbury Ct
A briefly psychedelic Lancaster-Swimmer thought about Santa Rosa, Balmorea; but really this is just a brief blink as a pretext or a way in to get to the Canterbury Ct pool, bring it back to childhood, infancy even, I become the infant at last; but this is not some Lennon-primal psychedelic conclusion, it's just one more oscillation, one more way of dissolving the self, that endless repetition which is never anymore done once and for all than is your next breath breathed for you by the previous one, which is not, of course, to say that it habit doesn't intervene with a salvific touch as redemptive as Proust's unconscious memory. (The Canterbury Ct pool: Maybe I can make it active by means of the document about that house I assembled in early January; but also, I want to collage into it various memories of Nana's other pool too (the space-age psychedelic pink tube, and everything else I can find), because it's all the same, it's all the site of lostness, pastness, brightness, wholeness, pure happiness)

Accumulating & Staging Materiel

One of the sleepings, maybe the very first one, maybe the very opening of the whole thing:

[Note this is in conflict with my elsewhere stated plan to use basic-Fosse voice to decompose the "I" into sleep and recompose it therefrom; but I think I like this type of thing better]

Nemo bit the flowerbed. Earth and lilacs in his cottonmouth, Nemo breathes out and breathes in and the huile d'amande or at least a part [shade?] of a mist of it still is there and there is he.

Venus slips out of her furs and hangs a side and three limbs on a hanging indent on a fleuve d'insommellité. [Or: Venus slips out of her furs and is among a fleuve d'insommellité.]

Is there or was there and if there was then there is still or

is there still a mist of huile d’amande in through the window when last he asked and he asked Claude Terrasse [was it?] that’s his son in law to add a bit more yellow there because yellow is that of which one never has too much [what’s the quote? Want it formed right even if switched backward].

Venus she hangs on riverrun though the tangent [the forward moment from the incline of certain waves--word for it?] in the groove isn’t quite right as it is on a real oceanic break no it isn’t. Still Venus glides past Eve and Adam’s. And Nemo he’s there and he’s here and he’s there and his father would dream in French so this fleuve sits with him a certain way. Can’t name which just now or he or I might as well rise and void the bladder.

In the sack there are millions in there and up they sit so high & tight up there but not when lying and I am (down). Oh they hang so low sometimes when the water is the hottest that water is and the huile d’amande is in it and the mist is the mist of the hottest water and you positively swim in it. You swim in the mist (you, Nemo, I) swim in the mist and it’s positive yeah it’s never not a good thing when you’re already wet and in it at least once you’re wet.

… (Slowly piece it towards or weave it into the best exegesis of sleeping-to-waking I can)

All my exegeses of sleeping and waking

[A dream-sentence fragment on 12 February 2025: … a cassamander framed on the grass … (there were two lost arms to the sentence)]

From 28 May 2024:

“One of those associative chains which clink around in my mind, binding me with their links (involuntary memory is by no means unidirectionally salvific; it torments too, like a song you hate but can’t get out of your head; when I wake up I am sluggish and if I slowly and with great effort wriggle myself free of the darkness then it is only or at least always primarily to find myself constricted by these very same involuntary links, whether or not they ever be fruitful, not that the relative fruitfulness or absence thereof in this particular example is to be taken as representative): One of Monika Baer’s Mozarts, with his head tucked so round down into his little body; her comment about how long each of these paintings took her, in the context of her account of the waiting, the waiting, maybe the labor of waiting, the very fallow being fertile in her tending of the fields of the mind (these are not her figures of speech). Then the Städelschule (revealing perhaps what set this off: I had been listening this evening to a talk given by Julien Nguyen at Art Center, though in it he never mentioned his schooling), which always (not always) has tailing along it the image of the Städel lion man; the

lion man himself, compactly containing his figure with a tight little tucking of the tensile curve that follows straight up his back and then ducks over his spherical head, just like this little Mozart's; but beyond this figure the looser aggregation of figures that go under the sign "lion man," from the childhood way in which I registered the titular image of the Mumford and Sons song, like some Ewok or hairier Ginarrbrik or maybe a lion-faced boy from an early circus, all the way up to something I read this very morning, invoking a cast of half-lion half-man figures filing like some interspersed thread throughout history, possibly for the sake of saying something about de Kooning (particularly his "Judgment Day," maybe) though I cannot now remember where it was."

[There must be more which are not in here, under this heading, yet!]

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3 May 2025

Evening, as the light drained out of the morning; morning, as the glass drained out of the evening; morning, as the light glowed out of the morning; and these and a dozen other emblemata in measured succession, each inert, indifferently repeated but not indifferently varied, a scansion sequentializing the accumulation of faculties and first sensoria.

[This really is what happened when, or as, I awoke today.]

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31 May 2025

This morning the phenomenon of my waking was that of driving over a hill in a car, a hill not San Francisco steep, certainly not Mount Washington steep, nor even Echo Park steep, but rather like that hill on maybe Normandie going down to Koreatown, the one about which I always ask “is this Melrose Hill.” Maybe I had that sensation of the tipping of the point-of-view from up to down, traversing a neutral angle, that sensation registered as a lag or a blur in my first trace of world-consciousness, or maybe the analogy drew upon an abstract commonality not at all physical-spatial but rather having to do with the immaterial passage between the immaterial registers of non-consciousness and consciousness; either way, the slow and smooth tipping into wakefulness seems to have its character tied to that of a night spent in unrecorded dream following upon a strange evening of unusually potent beer-drunkenness: alternating North Coast Rasputin Russian Imperial Stout and Delirium Noël (justified with an invocation of “Swinter,” and noted as really the only beer around with a higher alcohol content by volume than Delirium Tremens, ten percent and change rather than eight percent and change) and only one or two of each but still falling asleep on the couch without realizing it (indeed with no memory of it) in a pile with Bella.

Not so late in the night, in volupté I sunk out of the world. Almost frictionlessly passing by were some instants, and then, with much more inertia and materiality and physical facts to overcome, but still not without calme, we reconvened what had been. A trace of an image, just a spare arrangement of some handful of curves in an extremely specific relation, remains; I wanted to hold it in my memory, I don’t have a Matissean facility with this, but I tried, and here is what of that precision remains (four hours have elapsed, Bella has gone, this is as much as I can remember). The dominant note is, precisely, the “evocation” of Matisse which was unmissable in the Kantarovsky which early last week became one of the paintings most strongly living in me (in the press release for Allergies Eli Diner wrote “Evocations of disparate predecessors such as Natalia Goncharova, Henri Matisse, James Ensor, Pierre Klossowski and Philip Guston dissolve into references to Soviet Agit-Plakat posters from the period of de-Stalinization”; even upon inspection, I cannot find Gontcharova, though in my search I found the below costume design of Saint Mark for something called Liturgie, which I love, and these “Pillars of salt” that I value for the way in which they make simultaneous the moai of Easter Island and the large carved stump from New Guinea or Vanuatu (I don’t recall) who, I said, “holds his sex”). Do note that I did not look at an image of this painting in at least the twenty-four-hour period preceding the attempt to remember the

detail of the curves that is the doubled drawing-pair below. In the three days between, I've filled my mind with Matisse, more precisely with the Matisse of Bois's "The Blinding" (again), but Kantarovsky's mediation remains.

I said aloud, Thursday morning, the first words from my lips, "piss water," when I saw the espresso begin to come out of my Gaggia. A name containing weakness (immediately palpable in the way it flowed out of the two spout-holes too readily, and in the grayish too-thin foam that was all that gathered on the surface of the dark liquid lacking in warmth), and also the unwholesome if not noxious nitrogenous mouth-air that I knew would be the primary sensation accompanying its drinking.

The ideal here specified by means of the negative: A thickness like that of honey, and not of honey that runs as fast as honey as warm as this coffee would; a warmth visible in crema of the color that nuts acquire when they are toasted (i.e., the Baudelaire-abstraction of a visible fact that results from the abstract subtraction of an untoasted nut, whether hazelnut or chestnut, from a toasted one).

It occurs to me that here Gaggia is not a bad objective-correlative for me, me a person, me in my capacity of artist. Sometimes I am fine-tuned and out of me flows liquid gold (the

persistent presence of piss brings a smile, but here, with the smile, I mean honey, espresso), often I am not, and in those moments the refuse becomes all I am, and I am the object of as much deserved scorn as is Gaggia (“piss water,” I said, and there was no love in my voice, to understate). But it’s imperative to immediately note that what I am pointing to as adequate objective-correlative is not a machine, just as what Duchamp draws in “Coffee Mill” and “Chocolate Grinder” are not diagrams of machines; they do not, precisely, have the status which is implied by the concept of “machine.” Nor am I just invoking the facile spectrum-unity of tool and machine that “gotcha”-compares computers to paintbrushes. Rather what this objective-correlative (Gaggia) and what Duchamp draws have in common is precisely what their diagrammatic status reveals: that they are knots, prisms, even, through which pass rays of light or flows (in-flows of electric current and filtered water, out-flows of liquid gold, through-flows of all impenetrable-unimaginable kinds which only begin with pressure and heat and extend through all of what we cannot name, “inside” the “soul”).

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28 June 2025

Yeseterday at 4 a.m., having been awoken, probably, by the red wine we had with dinner (an effect that I really hate, if indeed it’s true; my mother and her mother both held it so), I lay in bed and these lines settled in my head:

And go now let me sing of a time when
Under milk green hill and pain of perjury
Ludovic Nemo did a stout silence keep
And choked against it these tumbleform years
And strained and slipped that the blanket white night
Keep clean of him, his jester’s gesture word.

So I suppose this belongs in the aggregation of excrescences of the sleeping-waking oscillation, as a sort of misfire.

Snorkel/spearfishing: For one of the bathings

One of the bathing sequences ought to be a tropical snorkel, with all that I had planned for that idea once; then maybe there is spearfishing there too, spearfishing in a survivor-tropical way, the thought of spearfishing in the mind of a snorkeler (duality between very Catholic “it’s ok to eat fish because they don’t have any feelings” and on the other hand the fact that he had a pet betta (rumble fish, and the beautiful Matisse-goldfish-red betta in the tank in Severance, like reminding me of that iPhone aquarium app)); also the Avventura spearfisher and the attendant fantasy of subsisting off spearfishing, and then Picasso ritually-indulgently bathing in that same sea (what is there to catch? Those nearly-meatless rockfish (the gorgeously optically-active but venomous rascasse, or red scorpionfish; sea robin, resembling nothing so much as a leathery osteoporotic old man; the world’s heaviest eel, the European conger; and, if your luck is extreme, the horrid monkfish, that abomination, whose other names “frogfish” and “sea-devil” reveal only a sliver of the visual and tactile aspect) that go into bouillabaisse? What did Picasso get from it? Can I assemble a total catalogue of all his fruits de mer in every still life ever? Can I do to something what he did to the oursins (many of them are kept in Antibes, but I mean all of them)? What in the Raphael et Fornarina suite resembles the urchins (the answer is clear and it’s quite a striking figure)?).

Wolves: Something to thread intricately throughout all (or at least spanning all) the dream sequences

Think of My last wolf (vaguely) but REALLY see if there’s something I can do with what Bella said would be a better version of the “famous” dream analysis of Freud’s “wolf man” (it’s in a voice memo from 12 February 2025; it realizes an idea from (I think) 2023 that I felt enormously strongly about) (also Picasso Steinberg, philosophical brothel; also Matisse musicians, werewolf malchiki)

And: Think about incorporating versions of wolf man dream into various sleeping and waking sequences in the plan; also think about assembling as many different interpretations of the original signification-less sentence (chaque jour … dernier loup) as possible, and layering each one on, one by one, until finally it becomes clear that all that they all had in common was the original sentence itself

Also note possible necessity of establishing a certain relation to

Matthew Barney’s Redoubt

From Thomas the Obscure, this line, in isolation, has resonance applicable to Ludovic:

“... reminiscence, so that, as this false figure emerged from the shadows, acquiring through a useless meticulousness a greater and greater precision and a more and more artificial one, she herself, the narrator, already condemned and delivered into the hands of the devils, would bind herself unpardonably to the true figure, of which she would know nothing. / "What you are...," she said.... And as she spoke these words, she seemed to dance around him and, fleeing him at the same time, to push him into an imaginary wolf-trap. "What you are….”/ She could not speak, and yet she was speaking. Her tongue vibrated in such a way that she seemed to express the meanings …”

Ludovic and his world: topoi, aspects

I think Ludovic is from there but living in this room (with his back to the large armoire) in Los Angeles:
Find out whether there is a town in Belgium even more so than Sint Martens Latem; where is Sebastian from and what were those metallic reliefs?

Etc.

But the auratic substance of his story--even just as a fiction! That those in Ghent who know in closed rooms know where the missing panel of the altarpiece is and know, further, that it is in Ghent--that Ludovic lives today and in some other century, being, in other words, that Ludovic lives in the time of this fiction (if it is taken as fiction, not at all that this is the only way in which to take his story)--

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Hôtel de longchamp, etc.: The Paris of “le souffleur” is so distinctive; what hôtel in Los Angeles could have an article written about it by K., what brasserie could (like Lipp) have managers with

intrigue–knowledge crucial to the plot, etc.?

[Addition 31 May 2025:]

Was Lipp the brasserie where London Helly gave an interview? Yes: “He asks what I will drink. Whatever you do, I say. ‘But you might not like that!’ he exclaims, requesting vodka and orange juice. I order a coupe de champagne, to celebrate his exhibition.” … The overriding message of great artists is that they appreciate the hidden—that is, what’s real,” Nahmad opens. “They counter material reality. These glasses,”—he takes a couple from the table and slams them down again loudly—“these are invented, just an illusion. Brasserie Lipp,” a wave of the hand spans busy tables and gliding waiters — “all this is meaningless. The reason I love what I do is that we are close to people and things made by people saying, ‘I exist and this is how I feel.’” [He proceeds to cancel the vodka and orders champagne along with the two most expensive things on the menu: Foie gras (there’s some kind of liver damage joke to make here) and sole meunière.] “The sole, perfectly filleted, buttery, succulent, is served, with new potatoes. Nahmad ignores the vegetables and approaches the fish methodically, preoccupied again with his exhibition.”

There is much window, wall, ceiling here, but it doesn’t feel first-principles-amenable, it’s a dazzling, instead, of reflection and glass, even more so than that Bonnard (which, for what it’s worth, plots a middle ground on the way from manageable-schematic to dazzling).

Relation of all Reverdy’s room-figurations (in Au soleil du plafond etc.) (see many notes toward this via Schroeder , in the 25_05 document) to Derrida’s sublime (“high up, but still under, maybe just under”) and Hölderlin; my own garret, my mountain / mist (that I always say I walk up into, unto disappearance, etc.: Ludovic Jockeys and grooms might be good figures to make to pass through L’s room, up high, but with a crucially important ceiling and distinctive window that I’d like to charge (in words and in painting) with the same manifold status that Reverdy’s wall (and lucarne and plafond) take on (see Schroeder’s discussion of Au soleil du plafond and Jockeys camouflés). Are these grooms and jockeys to be artists by other names? What about wolves? What about a third, more L.A. species of person? Or am I to charge all I’ve ever found in any artist (in the

“painting / re-symbolism” doc, eg) into a figure (as bisexual as god or as an angel or as the mage in the Redon etching or as the philosopher of Schutz) which can hold all the valences of all art I’ve ever known (all those traces left on a wall - see Jockeys discussion) in his / her own hand-registration (-history): by means, perhaps, of a taxonomy like that I ideate in parallel to Grotjahn at that one energetic point in the “painting / re-Symbolism” doc.
[Addition 23 May 2025: Grooms to be another class appended to that of horse-dealers: and they can be imbued with the traits of conservators, e.g. forming a committee or a panel and publishing notes, and errata, and addenda, which are to derive their form and much of their language from the aggregated emissions of the Getty panel painting initiative, but all of this unsubtly having subbed-out a less-than-complete portion of its medium-specific vocabulary for a different one, namely that of horses. / And the grooms also have something to do with racing specifically, and greyhounds, and Bacon’s memory of the estate in Ireland, which is also to be superposed onto Ludovic’s memory of his site of origin.]
Anyway in my still lives the wall is a hugely important figure, as manifold and important as it is for Twombly Farber Baer Martinez, say. There ought not always to be a “still life” (at least as conventionally understood) before this manifold. In other words, it might be time I stop calling them by that name and start calling them “paintings.”

I think I’ve got it: the horse dealers that he has to ring up, and that he has to go out and see (maybe because of an “uncle” who may or may not be the omnibenevolent magus; maybe he has to go out and see them at a former hotel with ornate wrought-brass grille and buzzer system from the 1920s, from just after the war which in this 30s-moment (this is where we are, at times, though it is unstated) is still called “the war”) and not transact with (and every time he sees them he remains chaste, it seems, an utterly static commitment in speech, and yet it becomes unclear the next time around whether he has really transacted with them), they are to be the embodiment of everything deadened, everything that is capital, everything that is kitsch, everything that is commodified, everything that misses aesthesis unredeemably.
They always ask him doesn’t he want to deal in horses, and he always has to tell them no, he longer deals in horses, no, he never dealt in horses; and they tell him but you are only seventeen, you have a beautiful career in dealing horses ahead of you, a face as clear and a body as lithe and a frame as neutrally august as yours cannot be allowed to pass this world (of horse dealing) by without making good on all of the advantage nascent in it; and he has to tell them, again and again, I do not deal in horses. And I am not seventeen any longer.

(Though somehow it must be that he is getting even younger: when next they insist, they are insisting that he is sixteen, that they were just consulting his medical records (what checks do they perform on racehorses?) and--what athletically pure numbers, by the way--they were certain, they had to look twice because they could have vouched they were quite certain he had been seventeen, but, yes, it's true, they checked, his date of birth appeared on each page in the same lower corner, they remember it well, and did he know by the way that he shares it with __ (someone a stand-in for 22 Sep Blanchot, or Michelangelo's birth chart or Mozart or van der Goes or Hölderlin or so forth). …

The horse dealers bring to him all thoughts frictional, all that is frictional, all that chokes me, all the strain I've ever registered in these documents: They are to bring it to him, so that all that is born of Ludovic, all that comes through him from out of the empty space as whose conduit he is perpetually situated, is nothing but the fruit of the pure in spirit, nothing but pure spirit itself.

The horse dealers offer him always visions of the pearl-encrusted and gold-inlaid allure that is his rightful inheritance, that he must not only decline but whose allure he must negate unto (and through) vanishing, and he must bear witness to this in his declining while experiencing no magnetism (and it would be known if he did).

Perhaps it is in the exchanges with the horse dealers that I, like Klossowski (in Le souffleur? I think it was in "Prose of Actaeon" that this was pointed out, or maybe it was in some other preface or postface), can cycle through all the formalisms of formal (scholastic? legal? Logical? No: formal) language, all the forms which conjugate the wide array of rhetoric-standard propositional possibility in the conjugational register. And these are to be experienced, by the reader, as frictional sites of resistance met and pushed-beyond on the way to and from the unional instances of contact with the void which, I still think, are to have my found-and-posed letters to Belle as their stand-in--sites of friction met and pushed through on the way to each of these tangent-points from the sensory-detail-attention-fixation and unlimited-zoom and free-conjunctive image-language dreamland, and on the way thence back to it, too.

I think Ludovic ought to be accompanied by a "wolf of a dog," said, maybe, near the end, and maybe only once, to never leave his side; probably it will be Maddie's malinois, described as with her unique way of walking, utter timidity, way of moving around less alike other dogs than to a Roomba or a praying mantis, but carrying with her everywhere, as a lithe glowing shadow, the august figure of the paragon of lupine domestication she could have been, instilling fear while exuding elegance, silent in spirit and silent in step, powerful but to no compromise of quickness. (Think also of the poet's dog in

Nostalghia)

Besides Sint-Martens-Latem there is Attert, the richest municipality in Belgium by GDP per capita; Etalle, in roughly second place, with a beautiful name; these two are right along the Luxembourgish border. Then there is Kraainem, the wealthiest municipality in Flanders. But the Lampens house, the brutalist one with the wood-grain indulgence, the one I loved, which is exceeding even among its ideological peers for its resemblance to a bunker, is in Sint-Martens-Latem, outside of Ghent.

The house was renovated by the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, which I've also been focused on recently; they are currently showing Calvin Marcus's skin paintings, and also painters from the loose-knit community along the Leie in collaboration with the Museum van Deinze en de Leiestreek.

It appears that Kraainem is also notable for its architecture.

(It’s not clear what town these last few are in.)

I’m in love with almost all the houses Hannes Coudenys has catalogued as “ugly Belgian.” https://www.dezeen.com/2015/04/05/ugly-belgian-houses-hannes-coudenys-archive-unattractive-architecture/

The studio-home of Raoul de Keyser, through photographs and through his paintings, is quintessential.

It must be that Ludovic’s home is the Van Wassenhove House by Juliaan Lampens, but perhaps it has aspects of these Kraainem houses; and that he has uncles in Etalle and Kraainem; the details, landforms, colors, plantlife, and public architecture (streets, sidewalks, forms of roadway network and footpath, marsh, snow) all derived from among all these places, with their distinctive and quite recognizable take on the “luxury modern villa.”

(This “take” has something also shared with places in Ireland, such as Sligo or Wexford, the later due to someone named Lukas Hendriks, a USC student whom I met in two Beverly Hills galleries).

Maybe an “uncle” is named Félicien Rodenbach, and is therefore as belge as any of Mallarmé’s amis, and it will be said of him that he “read” something (an activity akin to those of the agents of Le souffleur, writing and publishing such that a title bearing their name can be stumbled upon) at Brasserie Lipp, and what he read may be Mallarmé’s “Remémoration” or Rops’s ex libris for Poésies. The perversion of Rops being suitable for an “oncle,” an alchemist of Le souffleur’s type; the incorporeality of the instrument-manipulating hands being a sublimely adequate correlative for the abstraction of the motion (dynamic equilibrium, wave-oscillating harmony-stasis) of which the “Remémoration” is a literary-material crystallization. [One more quality appended: The pile of laurel-crowned skulls conjures a specific aspect of an idea of the Parnassians: That, perhaps in Montparnasse, perhaps not far from Lipp, their meetings were suffused with the same air that made one of them (Coppée?) an anti-Dreyfusard; this same wickedness reaching through Blanchot’s writings of the 1930s (?) to the journal for which Mathieu produced an emblem, and coiling neatly under the same allure-sign which I created for that knot around the Nahmads.

À des heures et sans que tel souffle l’émeuve
Toute la vétusté presque couleur encens
Comme furtive d’elle et visible je sens
Que se dévêt pli selon pli la pierre veuve

Flotte ou semble par soi n’apporter une preuve
Sinon d’épandre pour baume antique le temps
Nous immémoriaux quelques-uns si contents
Sur la soudaineté de notre amitié neuve

Ô très chers rencontrés en le jamais banal
Bruges multipliant l’aube au défunt canal
Avec la promenade éparse de maint cygne

Quand solennellement cette cité m’apprit
Lesquels entre ses fils un autre vol désigne
À prompte irradier ainsi qu’aile l’esprit.

Three things; the old mirror in there catches his eye, and Time slows down. Face, follow the hanging arms, pop the fingers, then turn away. Ludovic Nemo stretches his member out of its undergarment to empty the piss out of him, stretches it rather much, to clear the waistband of his slacks. (Jos. A. Bank comment) He doesn’t unbutton them because he doesn’t have to. Their waist is big. He keeps them up with a belt, but he’s been wearing them for eight years. He graduated from high school and from college (replace these with their Belgian names or wherever he was schooled: say, graduated from his Internat and Hochschule in them, from Schloss Salem and the Städelschule) in them. He received a ring from his monk in them. … (insert something about stretching the member, first pulling without resistance, and after an imperceptible interval of this beginning to encounter increasing resistance until he’s stretched out as much clearance as he’s going to get and it’s time to apply gentle downward pressure to the inelastic waistband and relax his pelvic floor.)

I need these horses for my horse-dealers:

I need these pipes for my Brasserie Lipp and my Closerie des Lilas:
Jacques Villon, “Têtes de pipes” (1945).

“Pipes en terre” (1945).

Landsknechte all these horse-dealers, freiherren all, and freiherren with titles won by halberd, won not by merit but in the transfigurative (yes, transfiguration is bivalent, not always salvific) incendium of their codpieces in a rage the question of whose justice or lack thereof is beside the point as soon as its fire catches.

Cf. Hauser on Pontormo: “The guards in The Resurrection not only recall Dürer’s lansquenets, not only provide a striking foreground and draw a magic circle round the figure of Christ, but their whole physical constitution and attitude also have an earthly weight and substance which provide the desired impact by their contrast with the transfigured body of the Redeemer, His weightlessness and spirituality and His soaring towards heaven” (187 - 188).

Mage!: “The oddities are immediately striking: beside a ruined monument set amid tree-trunks a distinctive assemblage of figures - a magus, youths clothed and naked, an occasional impassive woman and grouped torsos bearing massive heads - is looking at a curious array of stuffs, including decapitated heads, burning altars, punchinellos, snake-entwined staffs, owls and bits of sculpted reliefs. There is precedence for Tiepolo's manner of etching and the mysterious trappings in the etchings of the seventeenth-century Castiglione. Perhaps, in the materials depicted, as in the puzzlement they provoke, Tiepolo was coming up with a new pictorial equivalent to the 'incantesimo" or sorcery commonly attributed to Veronese. But the Scherzi remain elusive, haunting. Convinced that there is a code to break, some modern commentators have invoked the practice of alchemy, magic and the specialized taste of collectors as explanation. They have not had much success. What can be said pictorially is that the mysterious array of objects that puzzles the commentators was designed to provoke the curiosity and attention of the assembled beholders. They are not essential: a pen-and-wash drawing for the Scherzo of The Magician and Other Figures looking at a Burning Pyre with a Man's Head shows the attitudes in place without the trappings (pl. 19).”

And: That river-gods are uncle-alchemists, too.

"After us the savage god" (Yeats?), In the twilight of an empire, golden filaments invisible through the haze, glimmers latent in the dark, light at which we can only grope, under the spell of the witch-god who has succeeded to the old one under the same name (invisible cities 30-31: "At times even the names of the inhabitants remain the same, and their voices' accent, and also the features of the faces; but the gods who live beneath names and above places have gone off without a word and outsiders [algorithm, capital, commodified attention] have settled in their place. It is pointless to ask whether the new ones are better than the old, since there is no connection

between them ..."; I think of Paris, which I cannot live in because it is no longer there, the Brasserie Lipp and the Closerie des Lilas now themselves phantasmagoria of even the same Klossowskian sort that always filled them). The savage god who rapes eyes, rapes unto senselessness. We live in his city now (Los Angeles), a city of the second kind here: "[there are] those that through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires [Paris, Venice; these desires, then, are dreams, imagination], and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it [Los Angeles, Moscow, Beijing, now all; these desires are the totalizing ones, capital, spectacle, control]" (35).

In come the horse dealers. (Through their mouths speaks the savage god.)

Here (in Tomkins's Duchamp) is where the Closerie des Lilas differentiates itself from the (flashier? More Eiffel-tower-like) Flore and Deux Magots, meriting, beyond them, status akin to that which Brasserie Lipp has acquired for me. "A group of Cubist-influenced artists, most of whom had been painting until recently in the Fauve style, began to meet regularly in 1910 at one another's studios and at the Closerie des Lilas, the famous old Montparnasse cafe, where the Tuesday evening gatherings sponsored by Paul Fort's literary journal, Vers et Prose, brought together the older generation of Symbolist poets and writers and the rising generation of artists. The Cubist group-Robert Delaunay, Jean Metzinger, Albert Gleizes, Henri Le Fauconnier, Fernand Léger, and one or two others -felt the need to discuss and analyze the radical innovations of Picasso and Braque: the flattening out of pictorial space within the painting, so that a picture was no longer a window to look through but an object in itself; the fusion of image with background; the juxtaposition of representational and abstract elements; and, most strikingly, the shifting point of view that depicted objects within the painting from different angles simultaneously" (49).

And: "Many of these artists, including the Duchamp brothers, attended the Monday evening meetings at Gleizes's studio in the suburb of Courbevoie, and they also went to the Tuesday night soirées at the Closerie des Duchamp took a very minor part in the discussions and arguments at these meetings. A listener rather than a talker, he was still somewhat in the shadow of his older brothers, especially Raymond, whom he admired to the point of hero worship. Among the Cubists' favorite subjects of debate, though, at least two held special interest for Duchamp. One was the search for an art that would engage the mind as well as the eye; the other was the fourth dimension" (57).

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6 June 2025

I think I want to appropriate for Ludovic the episode of Duchamp and Gabrielle and the Jura, but make it uncertain to which of them is attached the apparatus of impossibility of the love (the apparatus that is the immovable object against which the desire has to press in order to derive its force, like locomotion by reverse osmosis).
To which of them the apparatus is attached: By that I mean, which of them is a fast fish harpooned and bound fast to the hull, an opium-smoking and fast-car-driving spouse and children.
That indeterminacy (to which of them those attributes are attached) can be introduced, maybe, somewhere in the middle of the narration of the episode with the train station and the letters.
And the fast-car-driving opium-smoking spouse should also be extended with the attributes of Jarry in addition to Picabia: He is to have the habit of calling his bicycle whatever Jarry called it, and the precocious imagination of a marionette play back in school (as described by Tomkins, of course).
Whereas to Ludovic is to be attributed all the many things Tomkins takes it upon himself to say about Ducamp's own handsome appearance, impeccably suave and simple manner, especially as a newcomer to Paris and even more especially as a newcomer to New York.

On the “Ludovic” side of the conjunction “Ludovic and his world”:
I recently (re-?)discovered Karl Walser, Robert’s older brother (moving slowly to Berlin where Karl already was involved was similar for Robert to what moving to Paris was for Duchamp with respect to Villon and Duchamp-Villon, it seems).
Anyway, I gather these drawings because, while they do not fit neatly or directly under the heading of “Dandy,” they are suffused, for me, with something that my idea of “dandy” absolutely cannot breathe without. I am of course speaking, here, right around Ludovic Nemo. Anyway:

Even down to the loaded relation to the window, the proto-Kafka uneasiness of the crowding of the flat (these aren't horse-dealers, but they may as well be),

Even--with what feels like the turning of a key, once thought lost, deep under my diaphragm--this image which does not precisely illustrate a dream I once had, maybe five or six years ago, but which captures what beneath the detail was really happening in that dream, if I transpose my own point-of-view into this pierrot, a move which comes by all accounts quite naturally to me.

Several other of his drawings, like this one, make palpable the way my dreams always have a vibratory sort of blur and an unpinnable sense of expansion or slipping at the seams or overlaps between the Merleau-Pontyian planes whose superposition forms a "singular" consciousness-instant-slice.

I regret the liberty of cropping but the immediately above also illustrates the thereabove.
By way of outro: A veritable conjugation of dandiform types.

On the setting (Spa towns, etc.):

Not that this isn't already treated, if glancingly, in more significant terms elsewhere; still, why not re-start a partial list?:

https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1613/gallery/&maxrows=39
I think the above link (alternate access: here) might, though laughable in its standardization, point me to an evocative way in which material has been archived unto "historical significance" in the UNESCO sense.

Spa: Setting of Belle, which I loved both reasonlessly less than and exactly much as I had ought to; partial setting of Barry Lyndon, which might be the best film I still have not yet seen because I still hold out for a theatrical screening); irrelevantly, birthplace of Hercule Poirot; possibly relevantly (I have not yet redeemed, but might eventually redeem, the aristocratic tradition of becoming a racecar driver--not, at least, besides recurrently admiring the below paintings by Alexa Hawksworth exhibited at Theta), site of the Circuit Spa-Francorchamps.
	Maybe most importantly: As it is in the Ardennes, in Wallonia, it justifies the French spelling "Ludovic."

Could I elevate racing to the same status that fencing attained in that Kleist thought-story? My hunch still tells me no.

Literary-material voices from which to derive various points on the sleep-wake oscillation-curve

I read the beginning of Thomas the Obscure with a feeling--too familiar to be passionate, but unmistakable--of the kind of recognition that, so the cliché has it, breeds envy. What I mean is that I know myself to be intimately capable of this same kind of sensory détournant-microscopy, which also reminds one of Saoirse Bertram's "Liebesleid" or Laszlo Horvath's "Memory is a Toy."

A powerful association for the immersion-sited body-self-decomposition with which I will scan my oscillatory work. (Of course I do not believe so much in the use of literature as means to "critique" the "subject"; a new suppôt reconstitutes itself, no matter what you want to call it. Only a true extreme-experience of aesthesis, true ekstasis, and I am still not sure whether even Bataille was really experiencing that (though I am playing along), deranges the "self" in so real a way as to put it under serious threat, into serious question, as so many theorists desire. The uncanny cannot be parceled out and bottled. Every painting is a new demand.)

Anyway, here is that opening, for convenient reference:

"THOMAS SAT DOWN and looked at the sea. He remained motionless for a time, as if he had come there to follow the movements of the other swimmers and, although the fog prevented him from seeing very far, he stayed there, obstinately, his eyes fixed on the bodies floating with difficulty. Then, when a more powerful wave reached him, he went down onto the sloping sand and slipped among the currents, which quickly immersed him. The sea was calm, and Thomas was in the habit of swimming for long periods without tiring. But today he had chosen a new route. The fog hid the shore. A cloud had come down upon the sea and the surface was lost in a glow which seemed the only truly real thing. Currents shook him, though without giving him the feeling of being in the midst of the waves and of rolling in familiar elements. The conviction that there was, in fact, no water at all made even his effort to swim into a frivolous exercise from which he drew nothing but discouragement, Perhaps he should only have had to get control of himself to drive away such thoughts, but his eye found nothing to cling to, and it seemed to him that he was staring into the void with the intention of finding help there. It was then that the sea, driven by the wind, broke loose. The storm tossed it, scattered

it into inaccessible regions; the squalls turned the sky upside down and, at the same time, there reigned a silence and a calm which gave the impression that everything was already destroyed. Thomas sought to free himself from the insipid flood which was invading him. A piercing cold paralyzed his arms. The water swirled in whirlpools. Was it actually water? One moment the foam leapt before his eyes in whitish flakes, the next the absence of water took hold of his body and drew it along violently. His breathing became slower; for a few moments he held in his mouth the liquid which the squalls drove against his head: a tepid sweetness, strange brew of a man deprived of the sense of taste. Then, whether from fatigue or for an unknown reason, his limbs gave him the same sense of foreignness as the water in which they were tossed. This feeling seemed almost pleasant at first. As he swam, he pursued a sort of revery in which he confused himself with the sea. The intoxication of leaving himself, of slipping into the void, of dispersing himself in the thought of water, made him forget every discomfort. And even when this ideal sea which he was becoming ever more intimately had in turn become the real sea, in which he was virtually drowned, he was not moved as he should have been: of course, there was something intolerable about swimming this way, aimlessly, with a body which was of no use to him beyond thinking that he was swimming, but he also experienced a sense of relief, as if he had finally discovered the key to the situation, and, as far as he was concerned, it all came down to continuing his endless journey, with an absence of organism in an absence of sea. The illusion did not last. He was forced to roll from one side to the other, like a boat adrift, in the water which gave him a body to swim. What escape was there? To struggle in order not to be carried away by the wave which was his arm? To go under? To drown himself bitterly in himself? That would surely have been the moment to stop, but a hope remained; he went on swimming as if, deep within the restored core of his being, he had discovered a new possibility. He swam, a monster without fins. Under the giant microscope, he turned himself into an enterprising mass of cilia and vibrations. The temptation took on an entirely bizarre character when he sought to slip from the drop of water into a region which was vague and yet infinitely precise, a sort of holy place, so perfectly suited to him that it was enough for him to be there, to be; it was like an imaginary hollow which he entered because, before he was there, his imprint was there already. And so he made a last effort to fit completely inside. It was easy; he encountered no obstacles; he rejoined himself; he blended with himself, entering into this place which no one else could penetrate.

“At last he had to come back. He found his way easily and his feet touched bottom at a place which some of the swimmers used for diving. The fatigue was gone. He still had a humming in his ears and a burning in his eyes, as might be expected after staying too long in the salt water. He became conscious of this as, turning toward the infinite sheet of water reflecting the sun, he tried to tell in which direction he had gone. At that point, there was a real mist before his sight, and he could pick out absolutely anything in this murky void which his

gaze penetrated feverishly. Peering out, he discovered a man who was swimming far off, nearly lost below the horizon. At such a distance, the swimmer was always escaping him. He would see him, then lose sight of him, though he had the feeling that he was following his every move: not only perceiving him clearly all the time, but being brought near him in a completely intimate way, such that no other sort of contact could have brought him closer. He stayed a long time, watching and wait-ing. There was in this contemplation something painful which resembled the manifestation of an excessive freedom, a freedom obtained by breaking every bond. His face clouded over and took on an unusual expression."
And the second part, where "HE NEVERTHELESS DECIDED to turn his back to the sea and entered a small woods where he lay down after taking a few steps" and then he is in that hole or hollow or grave, affords ample more of just what I'm talking about.

That Ludovic Nemo is to be doubled, as I once suggested; that, like Asle's namesake and the double in Souffleur, their conflation is to reach the apogee of its tension in that it renders love impossible and uniquely possible, in that they share every climax, or share in missing it, absented always simultaneously and at the other's expense; and between them (in two senses) are such extases (violent and erotic) as "Even when lovers twist their naked bodies, skin against skin, seeking the position that will give one the most pleasure in the other, even when murderers plunge the knife into the black veins of the neck and more clotted blood pours out the more they press the blade that slips between the tendons …" (53) and "conversations, surprises, caresses, bites … meetings, seductions, copulations, orgies are consummated among them without a word exchanged, without a finger touching anything, almost without an eye raised" (51) and "At any hour, raising your eyes among the pipes, you are likely to glimpse a young woman, or many young women, slender, not talk of stature, luxuriating in the bathtubs or arching their backs under the showers suspended in the void, washing or drying or perfuming themselves, or combing their long hair at a mirror. In the sun, the threads of water fanning from the showers glisten, the jets of the taps, the spurts, the splashes, the sponges' suds" (49) and "in Hypatia you have to go to the stables and rising rings to see the beautiful women who mount the saddle, thighs naked, greaves on their calves, and as soon as the young foreigner approaches, they fling him on the piles of hay or sawdust and press their firm nipples against him" (48).
Things a choked painter thinks

Like being choked with rage but without any rage. Subtract rage from the idea of being choked with rage (which I never have been; I just

get this phrase from Klossowski) and what remains is something like “the choked or suffocated or gagged silence of Hantaï” (5 April 2024).

I think there is something in “painting / re-Symbolism” concerning this, something about walking, perhaps

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There are countless suitable notes in “painting / re-Symbolism”; it’s just a question of whose or what sort of mouth I can put them in: Do I need to transpose them into the third person? Do I need to have them spoken to stunned-silent Ludovic at his desk? Can he just “think them at” his interlocutors while maintaining mum?

Stray notes

Rilke’s Sonnet II, 14, I think, would make a perfect epigraph to my oscillatory work; perhaps just the last six lines, or perhaps my own translation of the last six lines, so it doesn’t have to say “meadows” (I’d translate it “clearing,” and I’d probably have to change some other things, too). But do they read well enough on their own, or do they need the “Look at the flowers,” etc.?

“Look at the flowers, so faithful to what is earthly,
to whom we lend fate from the very border of fate.
And if they are sad about how they must wither and die,
perhaps it is our vocation to be their regret.

All Things want to fly. Only we are weighed down by desire,
caught in ourselves and enthralled with our heaviness.
Oh what consuming, negative teachers we are
for them, while eternal childhood fills them with grace.

If someone were to fall into intimate slumber, and slept
deeply with Things—: how easily he would come
to a different day, out of the mutual depth.

Or perhaps he would stay there; and they would blossom and praise
their newest convert, who now is like one of them,
all those silent companions in the wind of the meadows.”

One way to make sure the dissolving sleeps come across as death-coded is to reproduce as a passing thought whatever Ratzinger said about sleep, as part of his making a case for the active presence and integration of death in life (television: “death embracing life” and tempest: “rounded with a sleep”)

“In lands transalpine and futures remembered, ….”

Thus could begin another of the chapters of my oscillatory “espresso cup” work, which, recall, are always to begin in the chaosmos / matrixial borderspace of “dream” “language” which is not properly a language (not consisting of signs) but rather a phantasmagoria of simulacra such as Foucault constitutes that notion in his “prose of Actaeon” for Klossowski. One of the greatest / deepest senses that I hope will set in, on the far side of all the oscillations, will be that the movement out of and back into the regime of simulacra will be so continuous, so seamless, so ineluctably retraced, bearing always a trace of both previous and subsequent repetitions of the same (the oscillation), that any facile idea of the distinction between the modes of sleep and waking will be blown apart, and out of the resultant rawness (possibility) I will present (again by repeated presentings) my own notion of “an artistic act,” the closest prismatic persons can come to what was in times past thought of as the Utterance of a signifying Word by a Subject, which is now seen to bear more resemblance to hesychastic repetitions of the name of God (l’innommable), and to things Harpham talks about in his “aesthetic imperative”, than to any familiar notion of speech.

Also note my dreamland (my “lands transalpine”) will be brim-full of Malteseness—things actually, in large part, derived from obscure Maltese history and histories of many other transalpine zones (Montaillou, Basque lands, Bohemia, Hungary, Finland, Flanders, Mathieu’s imagination of Capetiens, Flaubert’s Saint Antoine (in connection with what Klossowski or Foucault has to say about such Christians as that desert hermit, in contact with the demons of a Greek or Egyptian or otherwise pagan past—Mesopotamian? Celtic? Gothic? Slavonic?)

These thoughts being scaffolded by The Baphomet; here are a couple of details that I noted:

This is valuable building-out of the Prospero / alchemist / sorcerer / astrologer / Dana Schutz “Philosopher” / Bon Dieu figure / demiurge that I am ever at work upon, that figures centrally for me, I was lately given cause to remember, already in Ludovic Nemo, who in his first moments has presented a longing after a master (a printmaker, specializing in etching, as it happened). “The latter (who some claimed was German and called Wallhauser, while others claimed was a Sicilian named Fra Sylvano) was versed as much in astrology aS in medicinal botany, and had won the blind confidence of Madame de Palençay not only through predictions of his own that had come true, but also through operations that demonstrated the efficacy of his knowledge: they said that from afar he was capable of re-creating in the minds of others the image of a person he immersed in sleep; having subjected his pupil to such experiments, he no doubt exercised an irresistible influence over the young Ogier.”

The first section of the above (which I reproduce: “... the one of her nephew's two tutors whom she preferred. The first, a Burgundian clergyman and chaplain of Palençay, later asserted that the second had been the cause of all the woe that followed. The latter (who some claimed was German and called Wallhauser, while others claimed was a Sicilian named Fra Sylvano) was versed as much in astrology as in medicinal botany …”) is separately useful to me because it reminds me of, and furnishes luminous referents for, the floating nature (always from elsewhere, perhaps in some sense exiled) of sages in this world of hermits and of Kells-knowledge confined (albeit porously) to precious scriptoria. The person of Barlaam of Calabria, be his positions what they were, furnishes another. And all of this furthers my notion of Malteseness.

I want to retain the figure (or topos) of backgammon, and its archaic French proto-form, and in particular whatever board game appears in that one Baugin. Prompted by this: “At the beginning of the week, they began, the said Brother de Malvoisie and Brother Lahire de Champsceaux had met in the refectory of the lay Brethren to play chess, and it soon appeared to the witnesses that, as far as they could follow the exchange between said knights, keeping to the background, the game's stakes were not some prized object or sum of money, but the very person of the young Ogier, Lord of Beauséant, enlisted in the services of Brother Lahire.”

“Sylvano was clever enough to dissuade her at first from pursuing such an outcome. ‘You must know, Madame,’ he said to her, ‘that every prophet is always an impostor. Everything he says in a figurative sense will be interpreted to the letter by ambition; that is why refusing to take his words literally makes a prophet of an impostor.’” This reminded me of the climactic gypsy fortune-teller

episode of Michael Kohlhaas—the gypsy herself being a (Klossowskian) double, that of the wife, la morte.

I need to maybe give Ludovic a home like Brigge's Ulsgaard; what was that book with the affluent Belgian town of the horses and horse-tranquilizers (and, perhaps, horse-dealers, and an Uncle)?

[It was Amalia Ulman's "My Dog, My Husband, My Son," published in Heavy Traffic; the publication had just given a fragment, "that mysterious mental illness that made her live in the stables of her grandfather's estate in Sint-Martens-Latem for more than a month, living on carrots and ketamine alone," which, lacking even an author name, was all I knew, until, after days of searching in different ways, I found the full text on Ulman's Substack.

I hardly need to say how this insight arrives to me, me with my exquisitely bad memory, making Bella and everyone wonder whether I'm even alive, me with my eyes with no life behind them, me in my constant dismay at my lack of presence of mind except in those handful of flashes per day (and only on perfectly-arranged days without incident in the morning). "Proust had a bad memory—as he had an inefficient habit, because he had an inefficient habit. The man with a good memory does not remember anything because he does not forget anything. … Strictly speaking, we can only remember what has been registered by our extreme inattention and stored in that ultimate and inaccessible dungeon of our being to which Habit does not possess the key, and does not need to, because it contains none of the hideous and useful paraphernalia of war. But here, in that 'gouffre interdit à nos sondes,' is stored the essence of ourselves, the best of our many selves and their concretions that simplists call the world, the best because accumulated slyly and painfully and patiently under the nose of our vulgarity, the fine essence of a smothered divinity whose whispered 'disfazione' is drowned in the healthy bawling of an all-embracing appetite, the pearl that may give the lie to our carapace of paste and pewter. May--when we escape into the spacious annexe of mental alienation, in sleep or the rare dispensation of waking madness. From this deep source Proust hoisted his world" (17 - 19).

And when I need stand-in names to be able to use all I've written as

“re-Symbolism” notes, to make palpable the fil lumineux, the tensing of which is, really, the whole weight of the gesture of making my only spare marks to be (puttiphallic) studies after the master, I can use names like Bernard (or a Magyarized version thereof: Bernát) Marton, or Frei Carlos (or his full name, though he doesn’t seem to have had one), or K (as in The blower), or Paul Ricard (and perhaps names from Grasse or César Birotteau∗), or Dun Karm Psaila (or forgotten but recorded créés of the Maltese order du fil des années), or Pangur Bán, or (to confuse) Sarah, Monika, even Lucy, Emma, to all of whom, each time wholly and anew, he submits (disciplines, binds) his silverpoint hand.”

[∗ about which I learned from Constance Debré’s new excerpt in Harper’s: “Little bottles of neon-yellow liquid, the scent of pastis. Paregoric elixir, or tincture of opium, it sounds like something out of César Birotteau. You can buy it over the counter. The instructions say it’s to be used to soothe stomachache. All the junkies take it when they need a fix. Burroughs writes about it, and even Joyce in Ulysses. Over the counter, at the end of the Seventies, beginning of the Eighties, that means even kids can buy it.”]

On the status of this “oscillatory work”:

I can take a cue from the knot which precipitates Patrick Amstutz’s “The Christian Bain de diane” (an essay on Klossowski’s book, most useful as exemplary of the staggering array of sensitizations latent in the premise of an erudition like Klossowski’s):

“Quinsat emphasizes the "series of "tableaux' that glazes Le Bain de Diane" in accordance with a "circular" descriptive movement, he says, "from vision to commentary, attributed to the deferral without end of signs, and which feeds the entire work of Pierre Klossowski" [95]. And if he borrows the term "exegesis" from Foucault to describe the genre of the work, he immediately associates it with that of "narrative." A quarter of a century earlier, a commentary in the new Nouvelle revue française had already underlined the "disconcerting" character of Klossowski's book, by accentuating not only the strangeness of its thematic, but also the difficulties posed by the uncertainty of its generic belonging (which is echoed by the absent mention of a paratext): the critic, hesitating, suggested somewhat confusedly a typological kinship with philosophical commentary, theological scholasticism, prose poetry, series of paintings, historical narrative and even the analysis of myths [Amer 144].”

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2 July 2025: A finally-satisfying notion of the relation between this "oscillatory" writing and my paintings.

The idea last night, in my mind as a fixed system, that my writing (what I have called my "oscillatory work") is to be receptacle for every expressive or inscriptive impulse I have, like a scapegoat on which to deposit all that excrescent dross in order to clear a purity (a purity of impulse and thus a purity of content) for my painting. There is one, and then there is the other; there is one that there may be the other; only the latter is art, on spa town's anti-expressionist terms.

"In my mind as a fixed system": Immediately as this system-imaged concreted in my head, I was even more enticed by the prevision of setting up this model as (of course) untenable but nonetheless held (tenere) fixed as a model to be ever showably fallen away from, a horizon ever striven toward, the registration (precisely) of this falling-short being a true oscillatory organic unity encompassing both sides (kost-, the rib and shore root), its presentation (making-present), really, being the art-in-and-as-life supervention (simultaneous refutation and realization) of the more rigorous or even formalist fabbro-notion of art which I have often thought of as spa town's core but which is really more like its skeleton.

And so: Formalize and rigorize this fil lumineux painting practice all the more, Twombly-dedicate each scriptural material datum, let painting itself (drawing after Pontormo, imitating each Vermeer / Balthus / Hammershøi wall, conjugating my variables as did Ryman and Rapson) be the habitus which encompasses performance but is at the same time more than it, performance whose ritual dimension realizes an element that is agnostic to spectation, completely independent of audience.

And, all at the same time, open the taps of "espresso cup," the taps of Ludovic Nemo: Thinly veil that autofiction, deposit bare notes from bare life, and sublimate every desire. The jouissance of concretizing my very excrement, my living's dross, and of making to proliferate images that virtually--but for that no less effectively--realize my every desire, attain my every allure.

And each side cannot help but inflect and sustain, contaminate and nourish, the other. Such is sexual reproduction.

Espresso Cup

Overture (or Prologue, etc.)

I have more memories than if I were a thousand years old.
[Paste I remember my mother lying in state, …]
All that nullity I will spin into prismatically refractive substance of utter clarity.
I will spin all that, but an enormous armoire positively encumbered with bills of sale, gallant verse, warrants, counts of romance, and heavy locks of hair wrapped in receipts, holds fewer secrets than my sad head.
I remember I told my mother (the thing about Frances McDormand; and add that I imagined a depth to this sting correspondent to the depth of the ritual of care with which she tends her image. She does not give herself over to neurotic excess--not my mother--does not baroque her ritual with a fractal elaboration impelled by horror vacui; no, this is not my mother. But the hours before dawn are long, and greeted with an honesty in the eyes and a fiftyfold Ave on the lips which make my memory of my comparison, comparison posited with smiling eyes falling in time into regret, into a religious certainty that I am not worthy of my mother's Love. (Also see 12 January 2025: "I tense up and concentrate on preventing the extrusion of tears when Bella's smiling voice wishes me wellsleeping, because in that instant I realize that she will have to work this morning, in that instant because she has made no mention of this all the time that we have been talking on the phone, and I tense up, but I try to prevent real tears because I have cried about this too many times already. / Nobody should have to do this kind of work. Nobody. / I tense up and concentrate on preventing the extrusion of tears when my mother hurries out the front door in her black felt coat. At the thought of her arranging her hair for work and performing her makeup ritual in the pitch-dark hours before dawn is in any sensible way a possibility or a promise, I tense up and concentrate on preventing the extrusion of tears.")) …
Everywhere outmoded garments lie in old boudoirs filled with wilted roses, and I am that room. Nothing but the plaintive and pale pastels of Boucher respire the scent of phials left open there. These layers of scents and of gauzes, gauzes which cover, which kept warm, which inhaled oils and which revealed, they ___ [This has to come much later, when I'm ready to incorporate "Lover," and make clear the reason for the epistolary structure (the amour de lonh, address as the only possible mode) of the whole.]

Proscenium

There is a left-hand drawer that slides underneath a working surface that folds out from an enormous solid wooden armoire in the small studio apartment of Ludovic, a boy measuring twenty-three years, schoolteaching, or trying, needing to, for now, but mostly crying silently or sitting stunned and silent with his back to the armoire.

Aspiring to hang a bearded jaw slightly open and project it forward in order to crane a gaze up toward a magnificent heavenly vault, aspiring to emote gazelessly behind the wheel of an automobile piloted against a European chill, and aspiring to look askance with coat-pocketed hands, tightened scarf, ink-stained boots missing their laces. Aspiring, but managing only to secure two hundred hours of wagewinning work in the calendar year, and these spread so thin. Aspiring to play tennis analytically, stochastically, on a court so smooth and green he'd find it hard to believe it wasn't a projection, an extension of idea out into space. Aspiring to swim smoothly in an empty Olympic pool.

There is not even a beard, let alone an apprenticeship to a printmaker specializing in the craft of etching, the splendor of countless implements for which the viewer knows not even the function but the depicted would know feelings and workings, interactions with intricate systems of the memory of musculature. The splendor of a sinew-mind whose contents none could verbally formulate and none but the few could recognize by sense.

In Ludovic's head vibrates one sentence, words arranged without source nor aim. Chaque jour, le matin, je me réveille. Je ne pense qu'à mon dernier loup.

Under an aluminum-framed silkscreen in the left-hand drawer, a stack of eighteen paper slips of odd dimension. Ludovic halved sheets of A4 laser paper with a cut parallel to their shorter edges.

Letters, in a stack as described, written by a neat hand in deep black ink. But brightly—brightly—:

I

My dearest Belle, love of all my days from beginning to end (for I

loved you in your absence, and will again, if you leave before me): From the rising of the sun in the morning to the rising of the sun the next morning, you are my whitest sky, my deepest night; you are my darkest shadow and my brightest star; you are all things everywhere, and I love you in all things, I love you in my cup of coffee and in our children and in my forgetting and in my remembrance and in my breathing and in your breathing which I can hear even now.
3 April 2024

II

My Belle,

Like water you course through every space between ligatures in my body, every space between thoughts in my mind, and from there you permeate and inhabit every dry fiber, every dusty thought, and you make me new and whole. You are the fresh water which rinses and cools my sinew-mind full of friction. You do not know this, but you are everywhere in me, the aim and the source of everything I do, the point of my every departure and of my every return.
4 April 2024

III

Belle

Your face is precious to me, and when I look at it I am overcome by a need to press it against my skin, because my eyes do not do enough to transmit into my mind its sweet shapes, its soft curves, its bending forms. But neither ever does my skin, because there is something singular and absolutely impossible to reshuffle behind those shapes, behind the eye and nose and lip and cheek. Singular and untransmittable and constant and eternal: And it is this by which I know and in which I love my Belle.
8 April 2024

IV

The necessary androgyny of the creative artist.

My Belle,

There is a happiness in your eyes that shows itself, when it shows itself, across your face—not in the smiling wrinkles such as some people have them, whether in the cheeks or to the outsides of the eyes, but rather more inside the very geology of its structure, sweeping across your cheekbones around your jaw and chin and back; here, and in those diagonal hatching wrinkles which repeat laterally, these along just certain folds to which your joy applies a shear; and for these things I would sacrifice the entire world.
30 April 2024

V

Hardy Hill, Untitled (theatre 2), 2020. Unique drypoint etching, chine-collé, and plate lithograph on cotton rag paper. 13.75 x 17.25 inches (34.9 x 43.8 cm). Image reproduced without permission of the artist, Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles and Marc Selwyn Fine Art. Installation Image Photographer: Robert Wedemeyer. Individual Image Photographer: Paul Salveson.

VI

Belle,
Today I feel small, so small, and I feel no pride nor any confidence in the possibility I could ever be or do all that you deserve. Each day my waking up is a starting over, and I lose myself.
But I never lose you.
It is never clear to me whether you understand how much for me —my ongoing living, and my functioning, whenever I am so lucky—depends on your irreplaceable presence. Please understand that every word you say & every moment you are around is for me the most important reality.
All my love!
9 May 2024

VII

For Belle, long girl who moves in the most beautiful way.

I love you, and it is only because of you that I know the gratitude proper to life in this world; and even though I fall short every hour of every day, it is only because of you that there is any hope for me.

15 April 2024

VIII

Belle –

Today I feel a stable ability to propel myself ahead into the task at hand and ignore the shadows that often succeed to waylay me, and this state of effectiveness, this functioning in the world, would never have come back around if it weren't for the joy I feel in you (whether you believe in it or not)—the joy which you show to me, which lives from you to me no matter how sound its origins, is the sole indispensability of my ongoing existence.

Love,
Ludovic
24 May 2024

IX

My Belle whom I love with all of my capacity for thought, all of my intention, and all of my plans, all my vision both distant and immediate, I know that we have much now, even everything we need, and we can be happy, and we are happy, and we can even more easily be grateful, grateful without reserve; I know these things, and I know them well. So it is not in any way to go against any of these things, when I say to you, I say to you, I am overcome incessantly by a desire to give you more than we have, and therefore to find a way to have more than I can now give to you: precisely everything, precisely everything, so that there is nothing our family will be wanting. All this in love.

26 April 2024

X

The figure of Belle transcends all, supreme.

I love you, Belle with a favorite food! You made me the food that you always loved to eat, even changed the recipe because I did not believe in you, and I nearly cried when I saw your joy go on and on and animate your face into the biggest deepest smile and your whole body, tucked up on its perch of our new chair that you almost forgot to notice in your mnemonic ecstasy. You have shared with me your joy without reserve, and I will keep it in my heart forever, the center of my life.
17 April 2024

XI

Belle of the Beautiful Fish,—
—O You more sleek and slippery more glinting and glimmering than any branzino—
You arrayed for me those buttery lemon-rosemary flakes of flesh profusing next to a striped-beet mustard invention and a near neighbor of Yorkshire pudding and a lemon-honey experiment in cachaça after prelude of butter radish: We agreed on “smögås-orb,” because “-bord” carries a hint of dispersion which your presentation eschewed—
For this I love you (and for everything); If I still miss my mojo, it is no fault of your “embarrassment of riches.”
16 July 2024

XII

Belle,
You care for me when I am sick, and you answer me when I call out. (I have been bed-bound for two days, and those days’ dinners were among the most delicious I’ve ever had. You told me last night that I yelled in my sleep—I was having some absurd dream—and you listened while I came back to myself, and calmed me down.) What a sweet joy you have given me, to take comfort in your care!
10 July 2024

XIII

Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Section of column base from the Temple of Fortuna Virilis (Tempio della Fortuna Virile), from “Le Antichità Romane,” 1756. Etching. 20.375 x 14.8125 inches (51.8 x 37.7 cm).

Image in the public domain, retrieved from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

XIV

My little Belle,
More beautiful than the sun, in my arms you are smooth like warmth itself, and when I feel your skin on mine, even just a touch, I am immersed in it fully like soothing water. You are sweet to me beyond communication, and I will love you forever, I will, I will, I will, I will, I will.
13 May 2024

XV

Belle,
I always find myself revolving around a notion of a “someday”: Reflexively thinking about a “someday,” compulsively talking to you about a “someday,” and maybe most clearly writing recurrently to you about a “someday.” “Someday” when we will be able to buy a house, have a child, travel incessantly, live for periods in other cities, etc. Neither to repudiate nor to approve of this impulse, only to say that whenever it comes, every single time, and when it structures my behavior as a background condition (constantly), you are its end and its beginning, its heart: It is imperfect, but it is my love for you, in all my ardent weakness.
26 May 2024

XVI

This morning, as I was getting out of bed, I rolled over to give you a hug, as I often do, as you slept; but, in rolling, I brought my knee up to where, evidently, your hand was resting loosely under the covers, and I made your knuckles pop with a crunching sound. Without waking up, you responded to this event: The facial communication of pain distorted your face, and, as I saw this happen only three or four inches from my own face, a sting went down into my chest. Belle, let

me never cause you harm. I hate to see pain on you—it breaks my heart—and I am structuring my life accordingly.
20 April 2024

XVII

Beautiful Belle, belle Belle,
Earlier this morning I was drifting about our home (more ours than “our shared home” would denote—“our home”), brainless, terrified and crying in slow motion (this is how I always wake up). And then you called to me, present like an angel, i.e., where / when you were not expected: It was not yet 8, hours before you ever awaken (this was our first morning back from our (our) long trip, and you had gone to sleep early on yesterday’s strange but love-aglow evening). You called to me, and folded your long warm arms around the length of my back.
7 July 2024

XVIII

How many problems will he encounter in his attempt to close up the distance between the written act and the committed act?

I feel so close to you, Belle, so close—and if I’ve come home emptyheaded and nothing but bed-bound every day for the last week and a half, it’s been you keeping present a sense that every day is worth being alive to, with the joy that you let me feel when you jump into my arms. And in the middle of all of this you have been honored from without, as though the award were necessary to make me unfathomably proud of all that you are, my brilliant Belle full of life and love …
19 June 2024

XIX

Belle – Among recent days have been some of the very worst, and after them some truly good ones. I am never afraid that the cloud which comes over us now and then will come and stay. We will always have

real and beautiful days ahead of us, even though again and again we will be maddeningly blind to them. I am crying tears of gratitude that you always persist through this blindness. I do not believe that your persistence is attributable to cowardice only, as you say.
21 May 2024

XX

Surely I cannot hand her this.

My Belle,
Last night as I lay beside you and pressed you close to me, your face showing an ambient twinkling smile that reveals the sort of happiness that often but not always propels you forward (diligent itinerant) through almost all the phases (the silently overlapping stages) of a given day, a sense (the truest thought of which I'm capable)—that there is not enough time for me in the world with you, will not be enough time before we go out of it no matter whether we live short or long—came back to me with greater sting than it's had for some number of months of necessarily imposed non-consciousness, which I diligently re-imposed rather than conform to its truth and lose all control.
Love—24 Apr 2024

Surely not this.